

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

SANTINIKETAN
VISWA BHARATI
LIBRARY

823

P83

THE SCARLET CITY



TO
SIR EDWARD LAWSON, BARONET
OF HALL BARN,
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
IN TOKEN OF THE
ADMIRATION AND FRIENDSHIP OF THE AUTHORS

January 1, 1899

THE SCARLET CITY

BEING THE ADVENTURES OF JOHN FRANKLYN
AND HIS FRIEND ANTHONY FULLER

*In and out and round about the Wicked
World in the Second Half of the
Nineteenth Century*

WRITTEN BY

“POT” AND “SWEARS”

‘ When all the World is young, lad,
And all the trees are green,
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen !
Then hey ! for boot and horse, lad,
And round the World away !
Young blood must have its course, lad,
And every dog his day ! ”

—CHARLES KINGSLEY.

SANDS & COMPANY

17 BURLEIGH STREET, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

MDCCCXCIX

CHAP.	PAGE
XXIII. WE GO TO THE "BLOATED GRANGE"	325
XXIV. STILL AT THE "BLOATED GRANGE"—TABBY REDIVIVA	338
XXV. IN SOCIETY. LADY BEATRICE IN FANCY DRESS	352
XXVI. A SPECIALIST'S SPECULATION: MR MAC- DOUGALL BINGHAM	365
XXVII. AT GOODWOOD: A SURPRISE	378
XXVIII. HOW REGGIE GREGORY WAS "PULLED THROUGH" AT BRIGHTON	392
XXIX. AT COWES	407
XXX. WHICH TREATS OF THINGS MORE OR LESS DRAMATIC	422
XXXI. TABBY RE-APPEARS—THE IBIS OPENS	437
XXXII. MAINLY ABOUT MONEY-LENDING	449
XXXIII. MAJOR DODD-LAURISTON: A SCENE IN THE ALBANY	463
XXXIV. AT MOUNT ST GREGORY—CAPTAIN DRAKE- LEIGH	479
XXXV. I QUARREL WITH ANTHONY—THE TRAGEDY OF ROSHERVILLE CLIFFS	496
XXXVI. MORE ADVENTURES AT GRAVESEND — A MATRIMONIAL SURPRISE	509
XXXVII. "THE SCARLET CITY" SCORES A SUCCESS, AND FINISHES ME	523
XXXVIII. MARRIED LIFE AND ITS SEQUEL	539
XXXIX. I SAIL FOR SOUTH AFRICA, BUT DO NOT GET THERE. THE RESURRECTION OF GEORGE	561
XL. THE END OF GEORGE'S ADVENTURES AND OF THIS BOOK	582

THE SCARLET CITY



CHAPTER FIRST

CHILDHOOD

MY name is John (commonly called Jack) Franklyn. I come of old Saxon family, and am thirty-third in lineal descent from Egbert, first King of All England, but I have never disputed the right of the Queen and the rest of the Royal Family to occupy their present high degree. On the contrary, I am a thoroughly loyal subject, and only mention my ancestry in parenthesis to show that some Bavarian Princess is not the only legitimate claimant to the throne of the major portion of our islands. My parents were not rich, nor were they laborious. They lived on an income derived from landed property, which, no doubt, had in the days, when high-handed peculation was not looked upon as pocket-picking, been acquired by what the German Emperor would call the "mailed fist." My father never followed any profession, but he would have made an excellent dean, or possibly a bishop. As it happened, finding that the rapacity of his forebears had provided him with the necessities of life, he wisely resolved not to tempt Providence by any imprudent

speculation. He lived and died a justice of the peace and a deputy-lieutenant, his ambition reaching no further than the maintenance of these two territorial offices, unless it be that he aspired to become high sheriff, which he never was, owing to his not being a retired tradesman with considerable funds at the disposal of one of the two great parties in the Realm—I refer to a time when there were only Whigs and Tories, and not groups of nondescripts, renegades, and revolutionists. I was but ten years of age when my progenitor passed away with the reputation of never having failed, as Chairman of the local bench, to mete out the severest sentences at his disposal; of never having smoked pipe, cigar, or cigarette; and of never having tasted Scottish or Irish whiskey. These are virtues which should be recorded, other than those which appear on his tombstone. My mother was the daughter of an Irish peer, who, by some lucky political stroke, managed to be appointed, first, Minister-Ordinary, and then Ambassador-Extraordinary and Envoy-Plenipotentiary to most of the courts in Europe. I have never been able to discover in what way he benefited anybody but himself, but he was looked upon with great reverence by all writers on international subjects. The *Times*, indeed, on an important Continental Crisis, gravely suggested that he should be recalled from Constantinople or Copenhagen, or Kamschatka, and intrusted with the Premiership. But he remained where he was, and drew his salary with great regularity, until he died, covered with stars and decorations. It was after his death that my mother condescended to marry my father, whom she met at Baden-Baden. She was, I am told, particularly struck by the fact that he was the only

young Englishman in the place, who did not frequent the tables. This good trait, combined with a mutual inclination to Low Church views, soldered a union of which I am the unworthy result.

It was but natural that my mother should wish me to tread in the footsteps of her illustrious sire, and I was trained from my earliest youth up to believe that the Diplomatic Profession was the noblest in the world. I was told even in my infancy that my lamented grandfather, Lord MacWashington, was superior as a factor, in Nineteenth Century history, to the Duke of Wellington, both Napoleons, Mr Gladstone, Lord Beaconsfield (then Mr Disraeli) and the Emperor Nicholas.

With the idea, I suppose, that genius like the gout skips a generation, I was invariably pointed out as the legitimate heir of all Lord MacWashington's diplomatic tact, and when yet unbreeched was looked upon as an embryo Talleyrand or Nesselrode. I am afraid that beyond snatching the spectacles off the face of the respectable clergyman, who christened me, I made no sensation from the hour of my birth till the time, when I attended a day-school, where I distinguished myself by declaring, during a *viva voce* examination in the elements of Euclid, that "a circle was a figure inclosed by one straight line." The smart cut I got across the shoulders from the cane of my preceptor occasioned such a dislike to the author of the problems that I never succeeded in crossing *Pons Asinorum*; and at the risk of being considered a barbarian, I venture to ask how many small boys are bettered by being tortured with the conundrums of this old-time philosopher? To my mind, if lads at school learnt

the A B C Railway Guide by heart, it would be of infinitely superior service to them in after life. But if I did not make any progress in the mysteries of Euclid, I acquired a knowledge of French, which was the more remarkable, because the German gentleman, who taught the Gallic tongue at the school, would, I am sure, have been misunderstood by the most ready-witted Parisian. But the truth was, that my mother's French maid took a great fancy to me, and would bribe me with chocolate or other delicacies to allow her to initiate me into the language of her native land. Poor Thérèse! I think she imagined that she was assisting the intellectual growth of a future statesman. I know now that the books of which she was most fond were not of a character suited to a seminary for innocent damsels, but I read them as I read the Bible, with a mind wholly free from guile. I mention this matter of learning French because my thorough knowledge of it afterwards stood me in great stead when I came to years of indiscretion and began to write original plays for the stage.

I had one brother, George Victor, who, on the same principle of inherited family virtue, was destined for the Royal Navy, because my father's grandfather on the maternal side had been an Admiral. When I was just turned ten, and he was nearly nine, we had the misfortune to lose both our parents through the capsizing of a yacht in the Mediterranean, whither they had gone on a cruise with an old Duke, who imagined that he could manage his own vessel, but who knew as much about steering a ship as I do about driving an engine. The Duke escaped with the loss of his false teeth, but our father and mother were

drowned. Both George and myself wept bitterly when we heard of the fatal accident, but we cried more when we heard that we should have to leave our pleasant country home and be placed under the guardianship of my mother's aunt, the Honourable Penelope MacWashington, an old maiden lady, residing at Bath, where she shared a roomy stone house with four dogs, three cats and a parrot. I have reason to believe that she undertook this responsibility because no other member of the Franklyn and MacWashington families would. Moreover, she was by my father's will allowed a comfortable yearly allowance in case she consented to accept the trust. Never having had so desirable an offer before, she closed at once with the conditions, which were that I was to be brought up for Diplomacy and my brother for the Sea. As the sister of a defunct ambassador, and in view of her own courtesy title, Aunt Penelope was quite one of the most fashionable ladies in a city to which fashion went no longer. She spoke English with a strong North-Irish accent ; had a holy horror of the Pope ; and was very nice in her eating, always refusing the crust of bread on account of the contamination of the baker's hands, and refraining from butcher's meat because she objected to the slaughter of oxen, sheep, calves, and lambs. So she religiously adhered to a diet of poultry, fish, and game. She was tall and stout, and took constant and copious pinches of snuff from an antique Scotch mull, with a huge cairngorm on the top of it, though she looked upon smoking as a filthy and debasing habit, and frequently warned George and myself that no gentleman ever indulged in the practice. But so depraved are boys, that we made ourselves sick by smoking some of the old lady's

choice rappee in a clay pipe, which we procured on the pretence of blowing bubbles. Our guilt having been found out and reported by the butler, Mr Binson (a sanctimonious Presbyterian, who, it was subsequently discovered, had drunk all his mistress's finest wines before departing with the best contents of the plate-chest), our tutor, for after the Euclid incident we did not go to school, was summoned in to adjudicate on our punishment. This individual was a sandy-haired, scrofulous young Irishman of perhaps six-and-thirty. The only reason, I conclude, why he was selected to forward our education was, because having been trained for the Roman Catholic priesthood, he had suddenly abjured his faith and become more Orange than William III. himself. Aunt Penelope looked upon him as a Phoenix risen from its ashes, but I have reason to believe that Mr Cornelius Flaherty's change of faith was really caused by certain escapades at which Maynooth morality could not afford to wink. Nor were his intellectual attainments even mediocre. He knew absolutely nothing but how to drink "goes" of whisky at the expense of others. However, thanks chiefly to Miss MacWashington's recommendation, he had pupils belonging to the best families in Bath. His stock-in-trade was meagre, consisting of Mrs Markham's "Histories of England and France," "Mangnall's Questions," a pocket dictionary, an abridged Colenso's Arithmetic, and an Eton Latin Grammar.

Yet the rogue talked of his library, and declared that he was writing a History of Ireland. I have alluded to his capacity for lowering the "cratur," and, perhaps, I ought in all justice to explain how

we became cognisant of the fact. For an additional fee he would consent to take a select number of his pupils out for daily walks, and his favourite promenade was up the steep Lansdown Hill, near to the summit of which eminence is (or was) situate a certain public-house with a bench outside. On arriving at this house of entertainment, Mr Flaherty would order his companions—never more than half-a-dozen—to sit down, and, as he termed it, “Cool your heels, me dear bhoys,” while he himself vanished into the bar-parlour. On one unlucky day he was longer than usual, so I suggested to George that we should go into the house and see what delayed our preceptor. Accordingly, we crept in, and beheld our mentor carousing with two or three other tipplers. His back was towards us, and as we entered Mr Flaherty exclaimed: “Now, before I get back to them young trash, who’ll set up agin?”

I don’t know what possessed me, but before any one could speak I cried out, mimicking his accent, “Shure I will, Mr Flaherty.”

He turned round, livid with rage, for the men in the bar roared with laughter, and shouting: “Take that, ye divil’s spawn!” struck me with his Wangee cane right across the shoulder. This was too much for George, as loyal a lad as ever breathed. Scarcely had the blow descended when he halloed: “And you take that!” and flung a spittoon at our tutor’s head.

The missile missed the object, but, unfortunately, landed plump in the middle of a fine gilt-edged mirror hanging behind the bar. Then, as Mr Flaherty would have said, there were “wigs on the green.” The barmaid shrieked, the landlady called

for the police, and the landlord left off settling some bets with a seedy-looking customer in the corner. As to George and myself, we bolted outside to the bench, where our three little friends were trembling at the uproar. Before any explanation of the affray could be given, Mr Flaherty appeared through the doorway, and, strange to say, with a smile upon his ~~evil~~ countenance. He held out both his hands to George and myself.

"Me dear bhoys," he cried effusively, "that was a famous larrk anny-way. Come on one side for a minnit"—and he pointed round the corner of the inn. Mechanically we obeyed him, not knowing what was going to happen. My shoulder hurt me dreadfully, and I hoped that Mr Flaherty was not going to repeat the dose. But the tutor, if he had venom in his eyes, had nothing but honey on his tongue.

"Jack and George," he said sweetly, "you're two young English gentlemen. I didn't know it was you who came in when I was takin' me limonade. I apologise, on condition that ye'll give me your worrds of honour as young English gentlemen, niver by worrd of mouth to allude to this unfortunate occurrence again. Bhoys, I'm sorry. Can Con Flaherty say more? Your hands on it—your hands on it!"

We gave the rascal our hands. He shook them as if he would have liked to wring our necks. When we got home he told our aunt that a drunken man in the street had hit me with a piece of wood. We did not contradict him. He also said that it would be well to prosecute him, though he had given him a severe beating. Aunt Penelope, with tears in her eyes, took a huge pinch of snuff, and declared that since the family honour was avenged, she would be no

party to Police Court proceedings. She furthermore asked Mr Flaherty to accept the present of a gold-mounted Malacca cane, once the property of her dear brother, Lord MacWashington, in token of his distinguished gallantry. To our amazement, the scoundrel received it with his most devoted thanks. When the weekly paper came out there was an account of the imaginary affray and Miss MacWashington's generosity, which Aunt Penelope cut out and gummied into her scrap-book.

"Well, George," I said as we got into bed, "what do you think will happen?"

"Happen!" answered George, "he'll wait for us."

And when the housemaid had rubbed my bruise with arnica, I did not feel better, for I knew that George was right.

Nevertheless, Mr Flaherty was by no means altered in his demeanour, save and except that he never took us up the Lansdown Hill again. Many years afterwards I was told by the landlord of the tavern that Mr Flaherty squared the broken looking-glass by giving him two sovereigns, and the Malacca cane, which had belonged to my grandfather, the great ambassador. This latter fact we soon discovered.

But when Mr Flaherty was summoned by my aunt to give judgment in the Snuff-Smoking Case, both George and I felt that we were doomed. We were right in our conclusions.

"Me dear leddy," said our tutor with hypocritical unction, "you are indeed right in considerin' this a most heinous offence. The detestable habit of smokin' is grievous for men, leadin' them on to drink—and worse, but inasmuch as the boy is the father of the man, it should be nipped in the bud. I regret"

my decision, but I should be wrong to the truth reposed in me if I suggested any less severe remedy than corporal punishment."

"Corporal punishment!" exclaimed our aunt; "do you mean that the boys should be whipped?"

"That is preecisely what I do mane," answered Mr Flaherty. "'Tis the only way of subduin' the natural evil of the preecocious sinner. I do not advise that the flagellation should be cruel or over-dosed, but it should be effectively administered with a light cane. I deeply deplore givin' such advice, but I should be to blame before you, madam, and my Maker, if I deviated from the path of duty."

As you may imagine, neither George nor I heard the villain's specious pleading but the poor old lady on her death-bed—she was ill for over six months—gave me the gist of his remarks. As it was, he fully succeeded in his purpose, and we were ordered up for correction in the room where we took our lessons known as the study. As we climbed the stairs we could hear Aunt Penelope sobbing in her boudoir. No escape was possible, for Mr Binson, the butler, had gripped us firmly with his right and left hands, and ushered us into the study without any ceremony of knocking at the door. I daresay that George was rather frightened—I know I was, but, thank Heaven! neither of us cried. If he had gone off I should certainly have followed suit. As it was, when Binson had shut the door—I heard him shuffling about outside, no doubt listening at the keyhole—we confronted Mr Flaherty with sulky despair, as he handled a long and supple cane, which he twisted about in his bony fingers like a serpent's tail. "Bhoys," he said after a pause, "ye've disregarded

the bye-laws of civilization. Ye're found guilty of *non compos mentis* (the hound did not know what he was talking about, but, like a Spanish Inquisitor, delighted in prolonging the agony of his victims). "Ye've transgressed the regulations of that honourable leddy, your devoted great aunt, whom I may style without any slurr on her virginitee, your second mother. Ye've not only been detected in the fact of smokin', but alas! of smokin' snuff, a form of tobacco meant not for the mouth but the nostrils."

"I've seen you smoking," said George sturdily.

"Take that, George, for interruptin' my discourse," observed Mr Flaherty, catching him a rap over the knuckles, but George would not favour him with a howl. "Ye need not look round for somethin' to throw at me, there's no spittoons here, ye young divil. Now at the worrd 'One,' you, John, will extend the palma of your right or dexter hand. At the worrd 'Two,' you, George, will do likewise. At the worrd 'Three,' John will extend the palm of his left or sinister hand. At the worrd 'Fourr,' George will do likewise, and so alternately up to 'Twenty-fourr,' when the castigation will cease. Now attention—'One!' I made no sort of movement. "I said 'One,'" observed Mr Flaherty, with a grin of a hyena. I still held my hands behind my back. "Oh! ye demon, ye think to best me, do ye?" hissed Mr Flaherty, advancing towards me with the uplifted cane. He only made one step when he fell backwards with a loud yell, as George shouted, "Take that!"

"Help! Help!" screamed the wretch; "I'm blinded! Help! Help!"

The door was burst open, and Mr Binson rushed in. We rushed out.

"What have you done, George?" I asked, as ~~we~~ tumbled downstairs.

"Thrown a packet of auntie's snuff in his eyes," he replied, coolly. "Run quickly, Jack, out of the front door. Our caps are on the hall table."

We heard all sorts of cries and exclamations as we rushed down the steps and legged it as hard as we could down Milsom Street. Whither we intended to go, or what we meant to do, occurred to neither of us. We simply thought there must be safety in flight. At the bottom of the hill, after nearly being run over half-a-dozen times, we halted for breath. I spoke first.

"I say, George, perhaps you've killed him."

"I hope I have," he said vindictively. "The beast!"

"Well, what shall we do?"

"Let's have a bottle of gingerbeer first. I'm so thirsty."

We turned into a confectioner's, and after the refreshment turned to ways and means. Our united capital, after paying for the ginger-beer and two Bath buns, amounted to three shillings and four-pence halfpenny.

"I think," said George, when we had counted the cash, "that the best thing we can do is to go to London. They say the Queen lives there. It would be a great thing to see the Queen. Besides, she would be certain to look after us, when we told her who we were."

I cordially agreed with his suggestion, and we set off for the railway station, not having the least idea what the trip would cost us, or how we should approach Her Majesty, but full of that innate courage,

which impels young ducks to take to the water. When we arrived at the station we were wholly ignorant as to the proper course to pursue. George was in favour of asking a porter, but at Bath station there are few officials below the platforms which are far above the street level. Not a porter was to be seen.

"Let's stand by the door," suggested George, "and then, when a train arrives, they're sure to come down with the luggage just as they did when we came here."

As usual, George's idea was received by me with enthusiasm. We stood by the door till a shrill whistle and a rushing sound overhead proclaimed that a train had entered the station. Presently hot and dusty passengers—it was a warm July day—came flocking down, and myriads of porters appeared on the scene. I was for tackling one of them at once, but George, whose wisdom was far beyond his years, pointed out that they would not attend to us while busy with other people. The crowd was getting thinner, when we heard a jolly voice exclaim :

"Be careful with that basket. It's got something worth drinking in it."

The speaker was a short good-looking man with a brown beard and moustache, dressed in blue serge, with a roll in his walk that betokened service on the ocean. While directing the porter he turned his face towards where we were standing.

"It's the Wicked Uncle!" whispered George, "let's run!"

But the Wicked Uncle's eyes were too sharp. He had us both in his grip before we could cut our cables.

"Hullo, my lads!" he exclaimed. "This ^{is} rattling! Have you come to meet your nunky? Good boys!"

Before either of us could answer, he had towed us out of the station and put us and his luggage into a cab. We were prisoners! Who the Wicked Uncle was, I will explain immediately.

CHAPTER SECOND

THE WICKED UNCLE

THE man, whom George and myself called "The Wicked Uncle," was Philip Franklyn, one of the two brothers of my father. He was a Commander in the Navy, and his sole claim to "wickedness" was his extreme good nature. Having a great admiration for the fair sex in general, he had never had sufficient regard for any lady in particular to get married, and so he led a jolly bachelor life ashore and afloat, being as much at home at the "Rag" or the Naval Club at Portsmouth, as he was on any one of Her Majesty's Ships. I do not think he cared much about his profession, for he was perfectly content to get what he called "a bunk on a trooper," where the "grub" was twice as good as on the ordinary man-of-war, for to tasteful food and drink the Wicked Uncle was always most partial. There was a story in the Service that, being engaged in slaver hunting on the east coast of Africa, he and a boat's crew, after an exciting chase, ran an Arab dhow ashore, when the Wicked Uncle, wiping the sweat from his brow as he boarded the prize, exclaimed: "I wish these d——d niggers were iced champagne bottles!"

He got the sobriquet of the "Wicked Uncle" from the circumstance that when George and I were very small boys indeed, he took us out for a ramble in

Chesney Forest, which extended for miles behind our old home in the country. As we were larking about in one of the grassy glades, the curate of our parish, a young fellow, who had just been ordained, rode by on a pony. "Hallo! Babes in the Wood," he called out, "take care the Wicked Uncle doesn't leave you there for the robins to cover with leaves." Uncle Philip flung his walking-stick at the clerical joker, but it hung up on the branch of an oak, which he had to swarm to recover the missile. The parson scampered away, roaring with laughter. Thenceforward, however, our avuncular relative was always called by George and myself "the Wicked Uncle," and gradually he became known by the nickname far beyond the range of the family circle. Indeed, it is on record that at a levée held by the Heir Apparent, Uncle Philip was greeted with his sobriquet by a Royal Personage, also in the "Navy trade." It was into the hands of this happy-minded rover that George and myself had fallen. As the fly began to rumble away from the station, I felt inclined to jump into the roadway, the while the uncle, still persuaded that we had come to meet him, continued to rattle on about our increased stature, the length of our trousers, what he had got for us in his bag, and at last he said—"But what I can't understand, is how such a very particular old lady as your Aunt Penelope allowed you two youngsters to go out by yourselves."

I was mum; it was George the Fearless who seized the opportunity for explanation.

"But she didn't," he observed quite quietly; "we're running away."

"What!" cried the Wicked Uncle, "deserting! By Aaron's rod! what are you talking about?"

Running away! Hi! driver," he shouted, "heave-to at the next inn we come to!"

The flyman touched his hat, and in two minutes we halted at an hotel not far from the Abbey Church. A bustling boots came rushing out, seeing the luggage, but the Wicked Uncle waved him off, saying:

"Just tell this jarvey to wait for half an hour or so; wet his whistle, and see no pirate swoops down on my chests. Follow me, youngsters;" and he walked into the hotel and up to the window of the office in the hall.

"Do you require a room, sir?" enquired a buxom damsel in a pink silk garibaldi, with a pen behind her ear.

"No, my fair one," answered the Wicked Uncle; "unfortunately"—here he gave a knowing wink to the lady—"I'm engaged elsewhere. But what I do want is a private sitting-room for a little while, some of your best Scotch whiskey and a bottle of Schweppe for myself, and a couple of gingerbeers for these lads. Sorry to give you any trouble, but I'm taking them back to school."

"No trouble at all," said the damsel, as the Wicked Uncle presented her with the *Illustrated London News*. "Thomas," she called to a waiter, who hovered near, "show this gentleman into Number Six, and come back to me for orders."

"Yes, miss," said Thomas. "This way, sir."

The only thing that I remember in connection with Number Six was that a portrait of the Duke of Wellington hung over the mantelpiece. His eagle eye seemed to be taking in the situation during the whole interview.

"Now, my pippins!" exclaimed the Wicked Uncle

when the waiter had brought the refreshment, and, as ordered by our relative, we had "moistened our gullets," "what's the meaning of this unauthorised cruise? I conclude that you didn't know I was coming to Bath?"

"No!" we both exclaimed together, "Aunt Penelope didn't tell us."

"Hum! kept me for a pleasant surprise, I suppose. Now, Jack, you're the elder scapegrace, let's have your yarn in three or four shakings of a duck's tail. George can bear a hand when you get a bit shaky in your lingo. Fire away!"

I felt as nervous as a cat sent adrift in a wooden bowl, but after a moment's struggle with my feelings I blurted out: "We've been sick from smoking auntie's snuff in a pipe."

The Wicked Uncle roared with laughter. The tears ran down his cheeks.

"Is this the reason of your skedaddling?" he asked. "Didn't the sensation agree with you?"

"No, it wasn't that," I began, then I remembered our promise to Mr Flaherty, and I hesitated.

"Come, out with it," said Uncle Philip, encouragingly. "Here, George, you lend a hand! Why did you want to run away?"

"Because," replied George very solemnly, "because of that beast, Mr Flaherty, our tutor, but as English gentlemen we can't tell you any more, except that I threw snuff in his eyes, and," he added, quite jovially, "I hope he's blinded for life."

"Well, upon my soul!" cried the Wicked Uncle, "you're a pair of the most outrageous villains I ever ran across. Why did you throw snuff in your tutor's eyes?"

"Because," I said hotly, "he was going to beat us very cruelly with a very twisty cane."

"Oh, I see," observed Uncle Philip, "but wasn't there some other reason?"

"There was," put in George, before I could speak, "but we can't tell you, as I've said, being English gentlemen."

"No, we can't," I observed; "we really can't."

"Did your aunt know you were going to be flogged?" asked the Wicked Uncle, after a pause.

"Yes," I replied, "but she didn't know why Mr Flaherty wanted to whip us."

The Wicked Uncle took a long pull at his whiskey and soda; and then, after twisting his moustaches several times, he observed:

"Now, look here, young fellows, you've got yourselves into a very hot case of pickles. I brought you in here because I wanted to know, before seeing your aunt, what reason *you* had for behaving in this unofficial and ungrateful way. I'll be hanged if I understand it all now. But let me tell you shavers that this snuff business won't put my nose off the scent. I'm going to get Mr Flaherty's version of the affair, and by Aaron's rod! if you deserve it, I'll lay on the bastinado myself."

At this terrible threat we quaked in our shoes, for the Wicked Uncle's muscles were in the finest condition, as we had had practical proof about eighteen months before, when we had filled the barrels of his gun with cotton-wool, soaked in turpentine, a mischievous trick, which might have cost him his life.

"Now, lads," said the Wicked Uncle, "I'm going

to take you back to your aunt, but, remember, I'll see fair play."

He then rang the bell and settled the bill, and, finding the room was not charged for, stopped at the office window to express his thanks to the well-proportioned damsel in the pink garibaldi, and also to imbibe another whiskey and soda. While he was conversing with the lady a nubbly-headed man, in whom I recognised the landlord of the tavern on Lansdown Hill, came up, and said: "I beg your pardon, Miss Jenkins, but would you take charge of this stick for me, while I play a match of 500 up with Mr Timpleby. Billiard rooms is queer places, and I wouldn't lose that stick for a mint of money, it 'aving belonged to no less a personage than the late Lord Wiscount MacWashington, one of our most hillustrious statesmen."

George and I pricked up our ears, and so apparently did the Wicked Uncle, for, putting down his glass, he asked:

"Did you say that walking-stick was once the property of the late Lord MacWashington?"

"Such was my truthful hassertion," answered the nubbly-headed man very pompously; "hand in proof that I ham no Hananias, observe the late lamented lord's crest and coronet hemblazoned hupon the heighteen carrots."

So saying, he placed the cane in Uncle Philip's extended hand.

"Quite right," observed the Wicked Uncle, after a minute inspection; "and now, without impertinence, might I ask how this stick came into your possession?"

• "Being a puffick stranger to me, I might severely

resent the hinsinuation that I stole it," replied the other; "But to dishabuse your hintellect, I may state that it was presented to me by my partic'lar friend, Mr Cornelius Flaherty, who's hat present trainin' 'is lordship's own grandsons in the ways in which they should walk." Here he caught sight of George. "Why, Gawd bless my soul and body! if that ain't the wery hidential boy wot threw the spittoon at the tooter's 'ead in my 'ouse!"

"Threw the spittoon at his tutor's head!" echoed the Wicked Uncle. "George, did you ever do such a thing?"

"Yes, uncle," faltered George, turning a kind of penny postage-stamp colour, for "Queen's Heads" were then of a brick-red hue.

"In course 'e did, sir," observed the landlord with more respect, apparently tumbling to the fact that the Wicked Uncle had some right of enquiry; "and wot's more, smashed my best lookin'-glass which Mr Flaherty paid for."

"Oh, indeed!" said Uncle Philip, "then, perhaps, you could oblige me with five minutes' private conversation?"

"Well, you see, Timpleby will be kept waitin' for our match, and there's quite a lot of nobs comin' to see the meetin' of Timpleby and Dosker, which is me—Jonathan Dosker."

"Thomas!" called out the Wicked Uncle to the waiter, who was hovering again, "here's a sovereign; go into the billiard-room, and say, with Mr Dosker's compliments, that he is detained for a few minutes on important business, but hopes in the meantime that they will do him the honour of drinking his health and that of Mr Thimbleby."

THE SCARLET CITY

"Timpleby!" shouted Mr Dosker after the retreating Thomas. "Well, sir, I must say as 'ow you 'do things 'andsome. What's your will?"

"This way," answered the Wicked Uncle, drawing the licensed victualler to a nook in the hall where there was a horsehair sofa. "I've no doubt this young lady will see that you young chaps don't get into mischief."

The damsel in the pink silk garibaldi, who had been marvelling what on earth the scene meant, and longed to be accommodated also on the horsehair sofa, nevertheless smiled a gracious assent, and producing a plate of macaroons, invited George and myself into her sanctum, when she at once proceeded to try and pump us with regard to our connection with Lord MacWashington's stick, Uncle George, and Mr Dosker. Rendered utterly reckless by the unexpected turn which affairs had taken, to the great surprise of George, I reeled off a story calculated to make the damsel in the pink garibaldi imagine that she had encountered a juvenile Munchausen. I told her that the stick had been dropped into the Bristol Channel fifty years ago by Lord MacWashington when crossing to Ireland; that it had then been swallowed by a shark, which was caught off Cardiff by a man named Flaherty; that the cane was greatly valued by the family because it had been presented to Lord MacWashington by Napoleon I., and that the family were trying to get it back, when it was found to be in the possession of Mr Dosker. George heard this romance without opening his mouth, but I could see by the way in which he shuffled on his chair, that he did not mean to corroborate my fiction.

"And is your name MacWashington?" enquired the damsel.

"Certainly it is," I answered, and truthfully, for I had been christened John MacWashington after the great Ambassador.

"And what relation was his lordship to you?" pursued the inquisitive young woman; "and what about the spittoon and looking-glass?"

My stream of falsehood was running very low. I looked to George for assistance, but I could see he did not mean to help me. I was at the end of my wits when the Wicked Uncle appeared before I could even attempt to satisfy the maiden's curiosity. In his hand he held the celebrated stick.

"I have bought this," he said, "from Mr Dosker."

He then shook hands most affably with the damsel; thanked her for her kindness, and promised to renew his acquaintance at an early date. Whether he did so I know not, but he certainly stopped the fly again in front of a florist's shop, and ordered a very fine bouquet of flowers to be sent to Miss Louisa Jenkins. How he found out her baptismal name I also know not, but in such matters the Wicked Uncle was as successful an explorer as Livingstone, Stanley, or Nansen in very different researches.

"Now, boys," said the Wicked Uncle, "it's a deuced lucky circumstance that I met you, and it's also a deuced lucky circumstance that I met Mr Dosker. You can return to your duty without any fear of being put in chokee. Remember I know all, and I intend that your Aunt Penelope shall know all, and that your friend, Mr Cornelius Flaherty, shall know all." Here he gave a quiet chuckle, gave three or four tugs to his moustaches and beard, as if expecting

some response from us. But George and I were too troubled in spirit to venture to put in a word. Accordingly, the Wicked Uncle began again. "On one point I'm resolved. You, Jack, shall sail away for Eton at the first opportunity. Meantime, you'll have to be grounded before you get your canvas set. You, Master George, will point your nose to Portsmouth, where my excellent friend, Mr Bloose, will put you through a drill calculated to enable you to get hide-toughened for the *Britannia*. We've got the promise of a nomination for you from the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Henry Lippington. He doesn't know much about the sea, having made his money by brewing, and the present Ministry are not unlikely to get the Order of the Boot before you're fit to take to the water. But even if Sir Henry has to pack up his duds, his successor won't cry "starboard" if he's said "port," in the matter of a naval cadetship. It's only when a poor devil of a Commander wants promotion that the bigwigs begin quarrelling about the right of selection, and knocking the official biscuits on the Admiralty table to see where the fattest weevils fall. But here we are at your aunt's. Now, don't blow off till I give the word."

I have read of the feelings of convicts, who have escaped from Portland and Dartmoor, when they have been caught and duly returned to prison, and, I expect, that George and I were in much the same frames of mind when the methodical Binson opened the door to our uncle's loud knock and imperious ring. Binson eyed us with no surprise. His countenance was as unruffled as that of a Red Indian. I felt rather alarmed at his imperturbable demeanour, because Binson had been, so to speak,

the Executioner's Assistant. But he took no notice of us, greeted the Wicked Uncle with the air of a Cardinal receiving an Anglican prelate, and told Valentine, the footman, to assist the flyman in getting in the luggage.

"And how is Miss MacWashington?" asked Uncle Philip, after settling with his charioteer.

"Miss MacWashinton hev been sufferin' with the highstrikes," replied Binson gravely; "but she is now partakin' of a Sally Lunn and green tea in the boudore. . The perlice have been communicated with, but I suppose, sir, all hanxiety may now be suaged with a telegram to the chief constable."

Binson said these last words with a wave in our direction, as much as to say, "The lost property has been recovered."

"Certainly, Binson," said our uncle cheerily. "Wire by all means. There seems to have been some misunderstanding about my nephews meeting me at the station. Now, my lads, run upstairs to your room, and don't come down again till you're sent for."

We scampered up like young squirrels, not without fearing that the horrible Flaherty and his cane might be waiting for us on one of the landings. On arrival at the Nursery, as it was called, we were confronted by Janet, our personal attendant.

"So," said she, "you've come back, ye naughty boys, after blinding the tutor and breaking your aunt's heart."

"Yes," broke in George. "We've come back with the Wicked Uncle—I mean Captain Franklyn."

"We! Captain Franklyn!" she ejaculated. "We! Captain Franklyn! Lord! how daft we

must have been not to remember he was due here to-day. Save my soul! but he should have arrived before the tutor. Not but what he went away blithely enou' after washing his face and drinking a pint of champagne to strengthen his nerves."

"Then he isn't really blinded?" I asked eagerly, for despite the scoundrel's treatment of us, I should have been almost grieved to hear of any loss of sight.

"Never a bit," said Janet. "Never a bit."

"I'm sorry for it," muttered George. "He ought never to see again."

"Aye, Master George, but ye're a vicious-minded lad," cried Janet aghast.

"I can't help it if I am," said George. "If I'm bitten, I like to bite back."

"Take care, Master George," observed Janet, as she put the tea on the table. "There's some creatures that ye can't bite because of their poisonous nature."

"Well," said George, as he tackled a huge slice of bread and butter, "if this was Mr Flaherty, and all poison, I'd eat him quite the same."

With which valorous threat he began a most excellent repast, in no wise daunted by the vagueness of our situation. Every minute we expected to be summoned before Aunt Penelope, but time sped on, and we were not ordered to go downstairs. At last I begged Janet to descend and find out if possible what was going on. She came back after a while, saying that Aunt Penelope still kept her room, and that Captain Franklyn, after asking Binson for Mr Flaherty's address, had gone out.

"We shall get that caning after all, Jack," observed

George moodily, "for I shan't be able to get any more snuff for the beast. I wish I had some pepper. But," he added viciously, "if he tries to beat you or me, I'll jump at his throat with this." And he showed me Janet's large pair of scissors, which he had slipped into the right-hand pocket of his jacket.

"O George, dear George," I said quite aghast, "don't—don't. You'll be committing murder."

"And a good job too," he rejoined, quite unconcernedly. "I should like to be hanged for doing a good deed, like Foxe's Martyrs were burnt for sticking to their faith."

I think he based most of his belief on the perusal of Foxe's Martyrs, of which, as may be supposed from Aunt Penelope's religious tenets, there were several copies scattered about the house.

"I only wish," continued George, his little-great mind swelling with indignation, "I'd only hit the beast with that spittoon. I might have been hanged, but I'd have been happy."

It would have been useless for me, the embryo diplomatist, to argue with George, for he was as stubborn as a mule, when aggrieved. I remember on one occasion, almost on our first introduction to Mr Flaherty's instructions, the tutor asked him what was the second letter of the alphabet?

"D," replied George.

"B you mane," said Mr Flaherty.

"Well, I choose to call it D," answered George, and—this was before Mr Flaherty flourished a cane—not all the threats or bribes could induce George to alter his decision. Brave old George! the courage of his opinions did him but little service in after life.

It was getting very near our bed-time, and long past the hour when we were, as a rule, sent for to do honour to dessert in the dining-room, when we heard rapid footsteps on the stairs, and the Wicked Uncle burst in upon our solitude, for Janet had gone down to supper in the servants' hall. In his hand he carried Lord MacWashington's famous stick, but fractured into two pieces.

"Well, my lads," he cried joyously, "everything is settled. Your aunt is too upset to see you to-night; but, Jack, you are to be prepared for Eton, and you, George, will start next term for Portsmouth. I thought you'd like to know everything was ship-shape. And now, good-night, and may sweet little cherubs bring you pleasant dreams!"

"But how is Mr Flaherty?" I began.

"Oh, bother Mr Flaherty!" interrupted the Wicked Uncle. "I've seen him, and——" he hesitated a second, "I've broken——" he hesitated again.

"His neck?" suggested George.

"No!" laughed the Wicked Relative. "Your grandfather's stick over his back."

"You're a brick, Uncle Philip!" cried George enthusiastically. "Give me a kiss."

And the Wicked Uncle kissed him bashfully.

An English boy does not often ask to be kissed, but George did, because, as he explained afterwards, "He felt he was like our father."

"There, there," said the Wicked Uncle, "you'll never hear of Mr Flaherty again."

Alas! the Wicked Uncle was not a prophet.

CHAPTER THIRD

TO BOTTLESTRAP'S HOTEL

I HAVE given the incidents of the capture of George and myself by the Wicked Uncle because the episode, as it afterwards turned out, was one of the most important events in our lives. Had Uncle Philip not captured us at Bath railway station, there is no knowing what might have occurred, for George and myself were fully resolved never again to submit to the tyrannical sway of Mr Cornelius Flaherty. Now that we knew the Wicked Uncle had avenged our cause we felt comparatively happy, though some dread of Aunt Penelope prevented our thoroughly enjoying the refreshing slumber, which is supposed to be the perquisite of all young people. Indeed, both of us awoke many times in the night with starts and shivers, and it was not until George and I had had a serious quarrel, ending with a severe pillow fight, that we sank to rest, dog-tired, on our respective mattresses. After breakfast in the morning the Wicked Uncle came upstairs, and told us that Aunt Penelope expected us in the boudoir.

"I may as well tell you, my lads," he said, "that your respected relative is walking the quarter-deck to-day, so look out for squalls."

We found Aunt Penelope literally walking not the

quarter-deck but her own Brussels carpet, armed as usual with the Cairngorm mull, from which she replenished her nostrils at every stride.

"Little rascals! little rascals!" she ejaculated angrily, as we entered the room. "Thank the Lord ye're not Irish MacWashingtons, but English Franklyns." She made no overture to kiss us as was her wont, but turned her capacious back upon our sorrowful faces.

"Come, come, madam," said the Wicked Uncle, "you mustn't be too hard on the youngsters. They had great provocation."

"And, by goles!" she cried, "haven't I had the same, Captain Franklyn? A poor, defenceless, single woman to put up with the tantoovys of a couple of brats, who have respect for neither age nor relationship."

"Well," urged Uncle Philip, "they're very sorry. Aren't you, boys?"

To my great surprise George immediately replied: "I'm not a bit sorry, and I'd do it again."

At this audacious speech Aunt Penelope's face became red-black with fury, and had she not worn a wig, I am sure that the hair of her head would have started from her scalp like the bristles of the fretful porcupine. At the same time she gripped hold of a silver candlestick on the mantelpiece, and dashed it after a few seconds on the floor.

"Ye hear that, Captain Franklyn!" she screamed; "ye hear that! He'd do it again! He'd do it again!"

"So I would," said George tranquilly.

"Order! order!" cried the Wicked Uncle, biting his lips after his exclamation, for George made a step forward, and stood with his arms akimbo on his hips,

defying the lightning of the thunderous old lady. Aunt Penelope gazed at him with amazed wrath. For an instant she seemed perfectly bewildered. Then in a hoarse whisper she said: "Take the vagabonds away, Captain, and never let me see them again."

As the Wicked Uncle pushed us outside, we saw Aunt Penelope subside into an arm-chair, while she dashed showers of snuff in her face, apparently regardless whether the tobacco reached her mouth, eyes, or nose.

"You've done it now, Master George," observed the Wicked Uncle. "You'll have to run in earnest before this gale, I expect."

We took the warning, and fled.

Our uncle's surmise was entirely correct. That same afternoon, George and myself, together with Janet, were travelling towards Paddington, Uncle Philip occupying a seat in a smoking compartment of the same train.

Whither we were going, we knew not. We only know that Aunt Penelope had refused to wish us good-bye, and that Janet wept most of the way to London, her tears falling the more readily, because Binson had provided her with an enormous case-bottle of Hollands, from which she continually endeavoured to solace her sorrow. At Swindon the Wicked Uncle put some gooseberries, gingerbeer, and Banbury cakes into the carriage, his grace being—"But, by Aaron's rod! you don't deserve 'em."

It was at this station that two passengers got into our compartment. One was a High Church curate with all-round collar, and a "clerical tourist" wide-awake. The other was evidently the flunkey of a bishop, for he had episcopal mitres stamped on all the buttons of

his plum-coloured coat. As the train started from the junction, the curate drew a Book of Devotions from his pocket, and, having crossed himself, proceeded to read from it with visible and labial exercise. At the same time, the prelate's heeler unearthed a copy of *Bell's Life* (as I know now from the *Nunquam Dormio* eye on the front page), and proceeded to read the account of a prize fight *semi viva voce*. Even George and I, young as we were, were tickled by the situation. The scene went something after this fashion—

Episcopal Menial—"Josh Trotter in the third round hit the Maggleton Magpie smartly on the bread-basket——"

The Curate—"Amen!"

Episcopal Menial (paying no attention to the cleric).—"In the next round the Magpie got his dooks in straight, and there was a rare scrapping match, Josh giving as good as he got. It was rat-tat-tat all over the ring. At last the Brummagem Beauty got his digits on to the Magpie's boko, and the claret that flowed would have done honour to a magnum of Château Lafitte——"

The Curate.—"As it was in the beginning, etc.——"

Episcopal Menial—"Josh made a desperate endeavour in the seventh and eight rounds to get home some of his rib roasters, but some smart reminders on the ivories soon showed him that this was no game of chance. Utterly flummoxed, he attempted to close—but the Magpie, as game a chicken as ever trod between ropes, fetched him such a thud under the left aural appendage, as to give him victory and the purse——"

The Curate—"Amen! Amen! Amen!"

I do not expect any one to believe that I, a small boy, remembered all these extracts. No; years afterwards, recollecting the quaint spectacle, I went to the British Museum, hunted up the number of the paper containing the above description of the "mill," and took it down in my note-book. The scene, if not the verbatim dialogue, is absolutely correct.

While George and I were grinning at the parson and the flunkey, Janet was getting to the end of her Schiedam, and by the time that we arrived at the Great Western Terminus her tears would have done credit to Niobe. The Wicked Uncle, when he came to dig us out of the train was profoundly disturbed by the condition of our female attendant, and he used many words which I had never heard before—but often since. George and I, who had not till then witnessed the rush, scurry, and bustle of a great London station, clung together, hand in hand, while Janet tried to dodge the porters wheeling luggage, and Uncle Philip endeavoured to find our own belongings. The Wicked Uncle had given his own particular dressing-bag into our charge—the one that clinked of glass when the porters moved it. George and I were sitting on it, when a dandified old gentleman, in a grey suit, came up and exclaimed :

"Here it is, after all!" and laid hands on the grip-sack.

He was so ready that he toppled George on to his knees, and I fell backwards. Janet was feebly searching behind us for her box. The dandified old gentleman was making off with his prize, when, by a sudden inspiration, I crept between his legs and gripped him by his ankles. He swung fiercely round

with a curse, to be confronted by the Wicked Uncle, but he was not the least abashed.

"Your young friends, sir," he said, "should not squat on this platform when travellers are endeavouring to collect their luggage. I very nearly took this bag instead of my own."

"In the meantime," observed the Wicked Uncle, with one of his curious smiles, "I'd advise *you* to take the sack out of this station, or ——" and he pointed with his thumb to a policeman.

The old gentleman vanished without saying a word, so nimbly that he might have been harlequin in a pantomime.

I was surprised to hear our uncle describe the patriarch as "one of the boys."

"And," he added, "these boys *will* be boys all the days of their lives. Well, I'm glad you saved my old bag any way. I'll not forget it." Nor did he, for the next day he gave me a sovereign, which I divided with George.

Having hailed a four-wheeler, the Wicked Uncle saw all the luggage packed outside, told us to hop in, tipped the porter who had attended on us, and **himself** assisted Janet to take her place with her **back** to the horse. Then, as we got into London Street, he opened the aforesaid bag and extracted therefrom a soda-water bottle, and a corkscrew, with which he deftly opened it.

"Now, Janet," he said, "you're a bit overcome. Here's some medicine. Put that between your lips and drink slowly."

Janet, with a melancholy air, did so. We could hear the gurgle of the Schweppe as it descended:

"I don't want any apologies or excuses," remarked

the Wicked Uncle, as Janet, very greatly refreshed, was beginning a confession of indiscretion. "Only remember this, keep off 'square face' when you're in trouble, and take a month's money to-morrow instead of being tried by court-martial."

"I'm sure I didn't——" began Janet.

"No, I know you didn't," interrupted Uncle Philip; "if you had, you wouldn't be here. So shut up!" So saying he lit a cigar. Janet, upon whom the beneficial Soda had a salutary effect, subsided into stifled sobs, and George and I, like two young savages, marvelled at the never-ceasing stream of vehicles and persons over the roadways and pavements. It seemed to me that in London there must be so many houses that every one could have a dwelling to himself. They were as thick as turnips in our big twenty-acre field at home.

Presently the cab drew up at a small house with "Bottlestrap's Private Hotel," inscribed in gilt letters on the window over the front door. The Wicked Uncle got out, and told us and the now tranquil Janet, to remain seated, while he went in. In about five minutes he came back, and said: "Unload the ship; it's all right."

We were ushered into a passage covered with black and white oilcloth arranged diamond-wise. A dirty waiter, with the biggest shoes that I had ever seen, held the door open, while behind him stood a page-boy, whose brilliant red hair was in marked contrast to his pasty visage. The waiter was hailed by the Wicked Uncle as Peter; his junior answered to the name of Paul—I need scarcely say that witticisms, referring to the robbery of Peter in order to benefit Paul, were current among the guests at Bottlestrap's

Uncle Philip, having sent Janet down to the lower regions, ushered us into a parlour, where there were a stout lady of thirty-eight or forty, a cockatoo with a lemon crest, and a little girl answering to the name of "Tabby." The stout lady, who was Mrs Bottlestrap, was attired in a red plush tea-gown with lace trimmings. Her golden hair was darker at the roots than is the case with most blondes, but her face was comely, and so very pink and white that it bore no great dissimilarity from a strawberry mess. She wore very elegant patent-leather shoes, with gilt buckles, and, altogether, had the appearance of a person of considerable distinction. Tabby was of about my own age. She was dark-eyed, slim in figure, and what would be called a pretty child. Mrs Bottlestrap called the girl her niece, and then I believed that she was. I may mention here that Mrs Bottlestrap had, in former days, been a semi-prominent member of the company collected by Mr de Barnabos for the illustration of opera-bouffe and burlesque at the Spree Theatre, W.C. I say "semi-prominent," because Miss Gwladys Corunna, as she then was, despite her fine figure and lovely face, was unable to give that force to the lines of an author which certain situations demanded. Let me cite two examples. In one extravaganza she had to exclaim :

"Once you were a *robbin'*, now you are a *ravin'*!"

She was only entrusted with two other words in the whole piece, and the author was unwilling to give her even the exclamation quoted. However, Mr de Barnabos prevailed, and Mr Slity, the stage-manager, coached her up till he thought that she was perfect. But, alas! on the first night Miss

Corunna, on getting her cue, declared to the travestie villain :

"Once you were a *raven*, now you are a *bird*."

Mr Slity tore out some of the few hairs remaining to his head, and the playwright cursed, but Mr de Barnabos took her part, declaring that *he* couldn't comprehend the meaning of the joke, but then, though he ran a burlesque theatre, he never understood the quips and cranks of what he called "the dramatic hat-pegs."

The other occasion on which Miss Corunna mortified an author, was when she had to declare to her stage spouse :

"Then you were *handsome*, now you are a *growler*."

Miss Gwladys always delivered the line :

"Then you were a *hansom*, now you are a *growler*!"

Even Mr de Barnabos saw that she was hopeless, but knowing the great respect with which Miss Corunna was regarded by the hereditary Grand Duke of Saxe-Seidlitz, he so contrived it that the lady, without opening her mouth, could appear as a Captain of Hussars, or Chief Page, or Lord High Constable, being, like a silent M.P., well to the fore "without any cackle." When the hereditary Grand Duke married the Princess Bobabriska of Scarabæa, Miss Corunna retired from the glare of the footlights, and, it is said, that on hearing the announcement of his engagement from the mouth of her long-time admirer, she woefully exclaimed, "Hernest! Hernest, you've deceived me!" Howbeit, not long after the royal nuptials, she espoused Mr Thomas Bottlestrap, who had just retired from the service of the Most

Honourable the Marquis of East Anglia, K.G., P.C., on whom he had waited for many years in the capacity of Confidential Valet, and Esquire of the Side Entrance to Brentford Palace. Mr Bottlestrap having a good connection and savings, and Miss Corunna ditto, the marriage seemed highly appropriate, and was duly noted in several theatrical and social journals, as also the opening of their hotel in Bloomsbury. Unhappily, Mr Bottlestrap had what he called (being a French scholar) a *penchong* for horse-racing and conviviality, and one morning his lifeless body was discovered in Barking Creek by a fisherman, who was dredging for flounders. Mrs Bottlestrap did not break her heart over the loss of her husband, but she buried him handsomely in Kensal Green Cemetery, engaging at the same time Mr Wisker (the dramatist whose lines she had murdered, but the only poet with whom she was acquainted), to write an epitaph for the Carrara marble cross. The tribute to the deceased ran as follows:—

“Here lies Tom Bottlestrap,
Who always was a rare good chap,
He thought with Life he could go Nap;
The Ace of Spades proved his mishap.

Mr Wisker was duly paid with half a dozen of Martell's three-star brandy for his sad quatrain by Mrs Bottlestrap, but I fancy that the authorities of the cemetery objected to the inscription. However, the widow had done her duty, and the best can do no more. Soon after Mr Bottlestrap had joined the Cypress Brigade, little Tabitha appeared at the hotel, where the business became better than ever. I believe that the Wicked Uncle was never acquainted

with Mrs Bottlestrap before she was bereaved, and that his subsequent friendship with her was occasioned by his calling on a messmate, who was sojourning at the widow's hostelry. The friend was out, but the Wicked One proceeded, nevertheless, to solace himself with some light refreshment, and with his rap-jacket manners soon made himself *au mieux* with the hostess. She was especially struck with one observation of her visitor. "I regret, capt'ing," she said, "that we 'ave no bedrooms on the ground floor."

"Why so?" asked the Wicked Uncle.

"Because," replied Mrs Bottlestrap with a simper, "I know that some of my gentlemen find it so difficult to get upstairs in the early morning after they've been to the Club."

"Don't let that trouble you," said the Wicked Uncle. "You put down a strong stair carpet, tell 'em to leave their boots in the hall, and as long as they've got the use of their teeth and toe-nails they'll climb aloft, never fear."

I have, I fear, digressed considerably from my story, but I want Mrs Bottlestrap, in so far as I can know her, to be brought before you, because, indirectly, she had much to do with my future career. Let me at ~~once~~ state, to avoid any misapprehension, that she was good-natured to a fault, yet suspicious and time-serving. She had no idea of morality as it is taught in copy-book headings, but she would, as the Wicked Uncle once observed, "lie like a Levantine," to shield a friend, or even a friend's friend.

But our first introduction to her must be looked back upon. George and I stood in the parlour gazing at the strange trio—Mrs Bottlestrap, the wide-eyed little girl, and the cockatoo, while Uncle Philip

lighted a cigar and quaffed one of his favourite mixtures.

"Now, Mrs B.," he said, "I've got to hoist the Blue Peter, but I rely upon you to do the best you can for these youngsters. They're thrown on my hands with a drunken swab of a nurse, who'll have to walk the plank to-morrow morning. Maybe they'll have to stay here several days till I can berth them elsewhere. I could have taken them to some swell roosting-shop, but, by Aaron's rod! what would they have been there?—One, two, three, four—a hundred—two hundred—any number you like, according to the chambermaid's tally—so I thought of you. They're desperate young Turks, regular Bashi-Bazouks. I wouldn't trust either of them with an ounce of gunpowder, but they'll keep their words, and do justice to their grub, that I will guarantee."

Here he turned to us.

"Now, mark me, if I hear of any mutiny here, I'll take you down to Wapping, and keel-haul you both on the best barnacled ship I can find."

We hadn't the least idea what he meant by keel-hauling, but we knew it must be some dreadful punishment, and shivered accordingly.

"You can trust me, capt'ing," said Mrs Bottle-strap; "I'll look after them as if they were my own. They shall have their meals with Tabby; and Paul, he's our page, shall take them out into the Regency Park and the Zoological Gardens. My 'ouse ain't usually a 'ome for destitute orphans, but I'll see what's done shall be done, as we used to say at the dear old Spree, *commy-foe*——"

"Thank'ye, Mrs B.," said our uncle, getting up and giving his trousers a shake. "Now, you boys,

you're plagues and nuisances to me, but I'll see you through. Good-night."

So saying, he gave each of us a pat on the head, bestowed a kiss on Tabby, and I fancy from a sound wafted from the passage, another on Mrs Bottlestrap, and departed in the four-wheeler, which had brought us from Paddington.

Mrs Bottlestrap ordered up a capital supper—cold chicken, bread and butter, marmalade, and tea. We did ample justice to it, but all the while little Tabby's eyes were fixed on me, like those of a cat mesmerising an unfortunate mouse. I felt very uncomfortable, for I could not look up without meeting the child's glance, curious, entreating, and captivating.

Even George noted her persistent observation. At last he spoke out in his usual blunt fashion.

"Haven't you ever seen a boy before?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tabby demurely, "but not a boy like him."

George laughed, and went on: "Nor a boy like me, perhaps!"

"No," she answered, "and I don't like you."

"Quite right!" he said; "and I don't like you—know that?"

He uttered the last words in so loud a tone that Mrs Bottlestrap, who was reading the *Evening Standard*, looked up in consternation. "What!" she cried, "quarrelling already! I'm ashamed of you."

"I'm not quarrelling," said George, "but I don't like girls, and that one especially."

"And I do," I said; "and you needn't be so rude George."

Tabby thanked me with her eyes. Mrs Bottlestrap rang the bell, and the page-boy appeared.

"Paul," said our landlady, "tell the woman who came with these boys to put them to bed—that is, if she's sober."

"She might be a dumb Dutch doll," replied Paul, "who'd taken the pledge."

He made this statement without moving a muscle of his countenance.

"Good!" said Mrs Bottlestrap, "send her up."

Immediately afterwards Janet, freed from the influence of Hollands, was piloting my brother and myself to an airy bedroom which overlooked Russell Square, one of the finest open spaces in London. Scarcely had Janet departed when there came a little tap at the door. I jumped out of bed. The passage outside was dimly lighted by a turned-down gas-burner. A small figure in white was before me. It was Tabby! She whispered, "You didn't kiss me good-night! So I've come to remind you," and she flung her arms round my neck. We kissed three or four times, and might perhaps have continued but for a step on the staircase. Tabby fled, and I, shutting the door, made for my couch. George was sitting up. He said contemptuously:

"I did think, Jack, *you* wouldn't kiss a girl because she asked you."

I made him no answer, but the horses in the mews below kept me awake for hours by their kicking.

CHAPTER FOURTH

THE FINDING OF ANTHONY FULLER

THE next morning the Wicked Uncle appeared—not with the lark, but with the canary-bird, which begins to sing about mid-day. Before his arrival, we had been taken out for a walk by Paul the page—the fact being that our female attendant still felt the effects of the “Schweppe,” provided by the devoted Binson, and, like many a lady of superior rank, elected to keep her bed. Paul took us on a tour which was wholly strange to our rural and Bath knowledge. I asked him if Tabby could not be included in the expedition, but he replied with a grin—“Tabby ’as ’er music clesson, she ain’t no good to us.” So saying, he put on a smart blue cap, bearing over the peak the inscription, “Bottlestrap’s Hotel.” Summer fruit in that year was very late, but Paul having discovered that we possessed a few shillings, immediately led us to a stall where the greenest of green apples, the most watery of strawberries, the most wizened of cherries, and the least succulent of early gooseberries reposed on layers of chestnut leaves.

“This is the Garden of Heden,” he said, as we halted, “and Hadam and Heve ’as to oblige the Sarpint.”

"I'm not going to oblige you, even if you are the Serpent, because we're not Cain and Abel," exclaimed George.

"What! yer won't fork out?" cried Paul. "Drat my buttons, but I depended on yer bits. You've the brass, put it down!"

"So I will," shouted George—I wonder such a little chap could have had the pluck—"here's my brass," and he, jumping up, struck Paul full on the nose.

George was never a lad to wait for the aggressive party. Paul reeled, but the small fist had done him no material damage, so he meekly observed that a joke was a joke and no more. George generously presented him with a fourpenny bit, bought a pottle of strawberries (a pottle, the queer tunnel shapes of which are known no more), and commanded Paul to convey us to the nearest place of recreation. Paul the Cowed suggested Madame Tussaud's (or, as he called it, Madame Twosword's) in Baker Street. We had heard of Madame Tussaud's from Aunt Penelope. She described the exhibition as the most marvellous representation of living and dead celebrities that had ever existed, but, at the same time, she warned us that the Chamber of Horrors was an apartment only visited by the very wickedest members of society—brigands, bandits, cut-throats, and abandoned persons. I need scarcely say that the Chamber of Horrors was the only place which we really desired to inspect. On consulting Paul, he assured us that "the Chamber of 'Orrors was the beautifullest sight in the British Hempire." To Madame Tussaud's we accordingly went, and after inspecting the various royal groups, were conducted by the now obsequious page-boy into

the mystic annex devoted to Napoleon and the scaffold. Paul professed an intimate acquaintance with every one of the originals of the models. His aunt had done washing for Mr and Mrs Manning, his grandfather used to play "shove-halfpenny" with Rush, Orsini had lodged with a cousin of his, and Madeline Smith had nearly married his uncle. Paul took a morbid delight in the details of the various crimes which had been committed and celebrated, and, as the French have it, he "embroidered" on facts with consummate ingenuity. George and I listened to his statements with the greatest interest, albeit we were—at least I was—filled with horror at his great knowledge of turpitude, which Paul illustrated from time to time by life-like illustrations of the struggles of the victims of the assassins. We did not at first perceive that our party had been increased by the arrival of a fourth person—a lad of some thirteen or fourteen years of age, who followed us from figure to figure, but at last, on Paul asserting that Roupell, of Lambeth notoriety, had forged his father's name, we were startled by hearing a sarcastic voice behind us exclaim: "You'll do, young feller, you'll do!" Turning round, we saw this same lad, tall, fair, stout, good-looking, with a sharp look in his merry blue eyes that proclaimed an early acquaintance with the ways of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. "You'll do, young feller, you'll do!" he repeated; "I've been listening to your highly interesting remarks for the last quarter of an hour, and, as I've said before, you'll do." With which address he softly tapped his nose with a light cane having a silver fox's foot for the handle. Indeed, he was dressed in a style considerably beyond his years, having on a velvet-collared coatee,

a crimson scarf with a malachite pin, a rose in his button-hole, and a tall silk hat with so broad a brim that he might have been taken for a boy bishop. Paul was fairly abashed by the attack of the young stranger, but seeing that the latter continued to tap his nose, at the same time alternately winking his right and left eye in a most perplexing and provoking way, our page-boy sulkily growled :

"Listeners never 'ear any good o' theirselves."

"Then it's lucky," replied the velvet-collared boy, "that these poor murderers ain't alive, or, by the rudder of my sister's pet cat, you wouldn't be here. Young gentlemen," he continued, addressing us, "I'm from the country like yourselves" (how he knew this he did not pause to explain), "but I know that what that young feller in the buttons has been telling you is a pack of trash. I suppose that next he will try and make you believe that his mother fought at Waterloo."

"No, she didn't," spluttered Paul, trying to recover his dignity, "but 'er brother did, and assisted to capture Napoleon."

"Very good," observed our new acquaintance, "and I suppose helped him to escape to St Helena. Now here," he went on, pointing to the well-known vehicle, towards which we had moved; "is the Emperor's carriage, perfect in every detail! You've only got to get inside and fancy to yourself that Napoleon is about to surrender. If," he added contemptuously to Paul, "your uncle really did take Napoleon, you might show us how he did it. But I fancy you don't dare to!"

Paul, by this time, was excessively wild.

"Don't I?" he cried, after glancing round to see

that there were no attendants in sight. "Don't I? 'Ere goes!" With that he opened the door and dashed into the carriage.

"Bravo!" said the velvet-collared boy. "You're not such a gosling as I took you for! But," he added, in a hoarse whisper, "look out, here's one of the officials. Squat down under the seat."

So saying, he pulled some string out of his pocket and tied the handle of the left-hand door to the brasswork of the box-seat.

"Quiet," he again whispered to Paul, as he went round to the right side. "It'll be all right in a minute or two." With that he deftly fastened the second door-handle in the same way as he had operated on the first. We looked on amazed, as children who are first confronted with a conjurer. Velvet Collar again whispered to the luckless Paul, "Don't move, or you'll be taken." He then gave us two of his twin winks, and beckoning us to follow him, glided softly from the Treasure House of the First Empire into the General Hall of the Assembly of All Nations. Here he paused before the effigy of the Duke of Wellington, and with the utmost jocularly exclaimed, "I wonder how young Buttons Napoleon will escape from Waterloo! But come on, and mum's the word while we retreat."

We ran down the staircase after him, and found ourselves in Baker Street. The whole affair had been planned and executed so expeditiously, that we were fairly carried away by Master Velvet Collar's manœuvres. But now that we were in the open air, we dimly realised that we were his allies in this outrage on Paul.

"I say," said George, when we caught him up, "what's to be done?"

"Nothing," replied Velvet Collar, "except slope. I'd like to see Buttons when Mr Tussaud catches him. I daresay he'll put him under the guillotine for the rest of the day, and perhaps execute him like Louis XVI. or Robespierre."

Having but a vague idea of the events to which he alluded, I said not a word, nor did George at first, but, after reflection, the latter remarked with his accustomed gravity:

"I shouldn't like Paul to be killed."

"Make your mind easy on that point, young feller," said Velvet Collar. "I don't say that he won't come to the gallows sooner or later, but just at present all he'll care about is picking and stealing, which we all know is strictly forbidden by the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. And now, young fellers, where do you hang out? Where do you live?"

"We are staying," I replied rather proudly, "at Mrs Bottletrap's Hotel, near Russell Square."

Velvet Collar gave an extra double wink as he exclaimed, "Oh! guests at Mother Bottletrap's! How's Tabby?"

I flushed up to the roots of my hair. George held his tongue.

"Oh!" observed Velvet Collar. "So the little Venus has taught you that one and one make two. And"—here he burst out laughing—"I suppose that Napoleon Buttons is Mother B.'s aide-de-camp, boot-varnisher, and chief bottle-washer. This is a lark, and no mistake. How she'll swear when she hears of this little bit of hokey-pokey. I wouldn't have her know

of my being Blucher and Wellington rolled into one for something." Then he laughed again.

"What is your name?" I ventured to enquire.

Velvet Collar regarded me with a quizzical eye, and then responded; "My name is Norval Walker, or rather ought to be, but you can call me Tony for short. In the meantime, having to lunch with Mr Disraeli at the Carlton Club at one, I'd better pilot you two young fellows home. You remind me of a couple of white mice that I once got in exchange for a worn-out electro-plated jew's harp. I dyed them green, and sold the interesting creatures to an old lady, who lived in Woburn Place, as Siberian Wombats, for one-pound-one-and-one-pence. And now young fellers, as you don't seem to know the hooks and eyes of London, I'd better take you back to Bottletrap Palace."

We followed Velvet Collar with implicit confidence, and in a very short time he brought us to the hotel, but not before he had gravely enquired of the crossing-sweeper at the corner of the street, whether he wasn't looking forward to woodcocks and pheasants being in season, a question which the man of the broom answered by replying that he didn't take out a gun license to shoot puppies.

"It's a fine thing to be a crossing-sweeper," observed Velvet Collar. "They live on the fat of the land. Green peas, new potatoes, and asparagus, they get before the Prince of Wales or the Duke of Westminster. Spring chickens, English lamb, early ducklings and salmon, at half-a-crown a pound, are their particular requisites. Do you know why I asked that knight of the brush about the woodcocks and pheasants? Of course you don't. Well,

I'll tell you. One foggy night my particular friend Sir Titus Tumbles—stingy man, always walks home and dresses badly—was stumbling across Trafalgar Square, when he nearly fell over a besom lying on the pavement. He picked it up, and was using it to feel his way, when he was hailed by a cove, also armed with a broom, who said: "'Ere 'Arry, you can take on my job—I'm done.' Sir Titus, who liked a joke, answered: 'Can't stop, mate, or my pheasants will be overdone.' 'Pheasants be blowed!' said the other cove. 'I was thinking of my woodcocks on toasts.' So saying he tossed his bit of birch-rod over the parapet of the Square, and disappeared in the darkness. Sir Titus got the story put into *Punch*, and henceforth, young fellers, remember that, unless in force, never chaff a crossing-sweeper about game unless you're prepared—I always am—with leg bail."

By this time we had got to the Hotel, and quite boldly Velvet Collar opened the door of Mrs Bottlestrap's parlour and walked in without knocking. The landlady was engaged in some mysterious operation with a pair of curling-tongs, over a lighted gas-jet.

"Oh! it's you, Tony Fuller, is it?" she gasped, as she picked up the instrument of adornment, which she had let fall on Velvet Collar's abrupt entrance. "And what do you mean by coming in 'ere in this rumbustle way?"

"Well," replied our guide, "I picked up these two young fellers in Madame Tussaud's, alone, as they say, in London, and not wishing them to be boiled down for wax, I made bold to ask them where they lived—they told me, and here we are."

"And, where's Paul?" cried Mrs Bottlestrap.
"Where's my page?"

"In the ledger, I expect," replied Tony. "That's where most of them are."

"Where's Paul?" screamed Mrs Bottlestrap.

"Gone to Waterloo, with Napoleon," said George very simply.

"Gone to Waterloo with Napoleon!" again screamed Mrs Bottlestrap. "Why, he'll be givin' me the slip to Southampton, and thence to—God knows where! 'Oo's this Napoleon? 'Oo's this Napoleon? Not that French waiter at Treadby's?"

"I believe him to be the same chap," said Velvet Collar with a sad smile. "But now I've brought the lambs to the fold, I must reluctantly say, not *adieu* but *au revoir*, for I have a long journey before me. Did you offer me a cigarette? Thank you, Mrs B.," and he had helped himself from a green wine-glass full of "paper weeds" before the landlady could collect her scattered senses. With one of his double winks at us, he disappeared.

I don't know what Mrs Bottlestrap could have done, beyond vehemently invoking the protection of the police, if pretty Miss Tabby had not appeared upon the scene. George and I were perfectly struck dumb at the sight of this dishevelled lady, in a dirty white peignoir, vigorously pointing her curling-tongs at imaginary foes. Tabby, however, soon made matters right. She seemed to be, what I ought to have been, a born diplomatist.

"Now tell me all about it," she said to me. "If you don't, I shall be very angry. Auntie, sit down and be quiet."

Mrs Bottlestrap subsided into an easy chair, and

substituted her cut-and-thrust manipulation of the tongs into a kind of windmill action. Miss Tabby, with precocious astuteness, then extracted all the information which I was capable of giving her in respect of Paul. She cross-examined me—George she did not even question, looking no doubt upon him as an unwilling witness—with the dexterity of a very juvenile Queen's Counsel. Finally assuming the part of a puisne judge, she passed sentence.

"Both you boys ought to have bread and water for dinner; Paul ought to be whipped; and Tony Fuller—well, I don't know what I wouldn't do to him—I think he ought to be shut up in a cage for life."

Mrs Bottletrap, who, by the help of a little brown brandy and water, had now recovered herself, observed in lachrymose tones: "I don't know what next to expect. That Janet woman 'as disappeared like a brigand in the hours of darkness; my Paul is locked up at Madam Twoswords, and Capting Franklyn 'as left me with that couple of young cormorants. It's a cruel world, that it is!" Here she took some more brandy without water, and having heated the tongs again, began operations on her brass-headed nail of a head.

"Did you hear what she said?" I whispered to George. "Janet's gone!"

"A good job too," he replied laconically; "only I wish I'd never been born."

This remark caused me to snuffle, because I thoroughly shared his feelings, only George was a boy who, even at his early age, forebore to give outward and visible proof of the sentiments of his mind. I, on the contrary, was weaker. I never cared very much for Janet, but I felt that by her desertion we

were getting to be young Robinson Crusoes stranded on an unknown island, without any luxuries such as a dog, a cat, and a parrot. My sniffing must have aroused the attention of little Tabby, for I soon felt a pair of thin arms round my neck, and a soft voice breathed into my ear: "Don't cry, Jack, don't cry. Boys shouldn't cry." And then she gave me a kiss. George looked on with supreme contempt.

Just then a commotion was heard in the passage outside. Mrs Bottlestrap, who had nearly completed her frizzling, flung the tongs into the grate, forgetting it was summer, the consequence being that a plate-glass fire-screen, adorned with dried flowers and ferns, was smashed to atoms. The landlady rushed to the door, and returned holding by the right ear the peccant Paul.

"You young rascal!" she exclaimed, loud enough to disturb the pigeons in the yard of the British Museum, or the readers in the Library; "you young villain! Look at what you've done!" and she pointed with all the inconsequence of her sex to the shattered screen. Paul, who had just been trounced in the hall by the dirty waiter for not being at his post to clean the knives, had, it appeared, effected his escape from Napoleon's carriage without observation. He had watched his opportunity, and hearing no one approach his retreat, had cut the string which confined him. From Baker Street he had legged it to the hotel with the celerity of a hare at the Liverpool Meeting. His feelings were outraged, first, by the cuffing which he received on entrance; secondly, by seeing us, the companions who had deserted him; and thirdly, by Mrs Bottlestrap's assault. The worm, as we know, will turn, though it has never, in so far as I know, been guilty of biting. In this instance Paul

was the worm, but his turning was more practical than that of the garden earth-raiser. With a shrill yell he broke loose from Mrs Bottlestrap's grip, and after retreating a pace or two, butted her full in the stomach. The lady, unaccustomed to charges of this kind, fell backwards over a Berlin worsted-worked settee; Tabby screamed; Paul snorted; George and I rushed to try and pick the lady up. To this day a black and white impression is left to me of Mrs Bottlestrap's fall—a cambric petticoat and sable silk stockings. I can remember nothing else. It was in this situation that the Wicked Uncle entered abruptly on the scene. All he could ejaculate was his favourite juration—"By Aaron's rod!"

This he repeated several times before he got the landlady on to her high heels again. He had some difficulty in doing so, for she had fainted, and was no light weight, as might have been apparent to any Inspector of Avoirdupois. Paul very sensibly took his departure without saying good-bye to the company, but we could hear him howling in the basement. The dirty waiter was avenging his mistress.

"By Aaron's rod!" said Uncle Philip again. "What's up now?" He took hold of the brandy bottle, and mixing two stiff glasses, poured one down Mrs Bottlestrap's throat and the other down his own; while we three children, Tabby, George, and myself, stood on the other side of the round rosewood table mute with astonishment. Mrs Bottlestrap came to immediately, and sighed heavily.

"What's the matter?" asked the Wicked Uncle in a soothing tone.

"It's my stomach, captain," said the landlady; "it hurts me horrible."

"Well, I've nothing to do with that, Mrs B.," remarked Uncle Philip.

"Certainly not, captain," said Mrs Bottlestrap, with a faint smile; "it's all the fault of that rascal Paul."

"Oh, indeed," observed the Wicked Uncle rather drily; "then he ought to be married to the gunner's daughter."

"I know nothing about the lady to whom you refer," said Mrs Bottlestrap haughtily; "but if she's a respectable girl she won't look upon such a scallywag as Paul. I'd give that limb——"

"Cut the cackle, Mrs B.," interrupted the Wicked Uncle; "you're going too many knots an hour. Steam slow, and mind the buoys."

"It's just those boys," said Mrs Bottlestrap angrily, "that I was coming to. They're the cause of the mischief, they and that rascal, Anthony Fuller. Oh, my poor figure," she added, taking another glass of brown brandy.

"Very sad," said the Wicked Uncle, and also helped himself, "now let's hear the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Mrs Bottlestrap, with the assistance of Tabby, then revealed the whole of our adventure at Madame Tussaud's, painting the incident with vivid colours, which would have done credit to her own make-up, in the days when her histrionic talent was so appreciated by the Duke of Saxe-Seidlitz at the Spree Theatre.

The Wicked Uncle never interrupted the narration. He lighted a cigar and listened intently, while the landlady and Tabby detailed the story, but he laughed with his eyes when he heard of the imprisonment of Master Paul in Napoleon's carriage. Mrs Bottlestrap at last came to the end of her indictment. Then the Wicked Uncle broke silence.

"And what do you say, Mrs B.?"

Mrs B. paused for an instant, took a sip at her glass, and replied, "Well, captain, I say, drat 'em!"

"That's quite sufficient," cried the Wicked Uncle, turning towards us — "it's more than sufficient. You two young rascals are in trouble again. Unless I'm a Dutch marine, you'll never steer into Fiddler's Bay. It's hard that a poor devil of a seaman should have the charge, owing to your insubordination towards your fine figure-head of a great-aunt, of such scamps, but, by Aaron's rod! I've got to do my duty. To-morrow morning I'll ship you where, if you begin rattling the wrong ropes, you'll have the rattan round your carcasses. You, Mr John, will steer for Mr Jenkin Williams's preparatory school at Blackheath; you, Mr George, to Mr Bloose's at Portsmouth, and may the Lord have mercy on your souls and bodies! Be off!"

With this extraordinary oration the Wicked Uncle dismissed us. We thought him in bad spirits, but, accompanied by Tabby, we had scarcely mounted the stairs, when we heard his cheerful bass laugh mingling with Mrs Bottlestrap's shrill soprano-cachinnation. We spent the rest of the day under arrest. Even Tabby was not allowed to come near us, but late at night there came a knock at our door. I thought it was Tabby, but it proved to be Paul. He held a note in his hand.

"I swore I'd give it yer," he said, with a sickly smile. I opened the envelope. The letter written in pencil was: "Beastly sorry for any trouble by my fault. Accept enclosed,—Yours, Tony." The enclosure was 5s. worth of stamps.

CHAPTER FIFTH

I GO TO SCHOOL

WE left Mrs Bottlestrap's hotel the next day under convoy of the Wicked Uncle. The former light of the Spree Theatre joined with Tabby in copious showers of tears, until a glance at the glass showed that these lachrymal torrents had covered her cheeks with a network of miniature railways, with crossings worthy of Clapham or Willesden Junction. Then Mrs Bottlestrap hastily retired under plea of giving some instructions to Paul about the luggage. She reappeared a quarter of an hour later with a countenance which would have put a *La France* rose to the blush. I had no opportunity for a tender adieu with Tabby, but I managed to shake hands with her, and press her fingers affectionately in mine. George took not the slightest notice of the little maiden, who, to tell the truth, returned the compliment. Uncle Philip explained his plan of campaign briefly to the landlady.

"I'm going to take Jack to school at Blackheath, and then make all steam for Portsmouth, where I shall hand over George to his naval instructor. Meantime, Mrs B., I'm obliged to you for your kindness. Please send your bill to the Rag, and," he added, throwing a sovereign on the table, "let your slaves and bottle-washers split up that bit of rhino."

After Mrs Bottlestrap had kissed us effusively, we departed. When we were in the cab I perceived that George had a red mark on his forehead.

"What's that?" I asked, pointing to a smear.

"I don't know," he replied ; "it's where Mrs Bottlestrap kissed me. I think her lip must have been bleeding, for you've got two red marks, one on your forehead, and the other on your chin."

The Wicked Uncle smiled sardonically, and observed, "Swab up the mess with your handkerchiefs, lads. I'm glad Mrs B. didn't put any fresh paint on my gills. Now look here, youngsters, I don't want any palaver, but let me remind you, you're going to be launched on a sea where there are more cormorants than cuckoos. Keep your weather-eyes open, look out for squalls, and never haul down your colours. I've no more to say on the subject. Here's a quid a-piece for you."

And as he had no more remarks to make, we naturally had none either. I felt very sorry to part from George, and I think his feeling was reciprocal, but he never said more than "Good-bye!" rather gruffly when he left me at Tadcaster House, Blackheath, in the custody of the Rev. Jenkin Williams, my new preceptor.

As private schools are very like one another, and their principals also, I need scarcely give any details of my life at Tadcaster House. The Rev. Jenkin was a teacher of short temper but great human kindness, and he had a knack of bringing out his full palm, when he boxed a boy's ears, which I have never seen equalled. In the holidays I was taken by the Wicked Uncle to what he called "Homes for Lost Dogs," *i.e.* houses where, for certain remuneration,

the owners were willing to receive school outcasts during the vacation. In this way George and I visited several vicarages, a couple of farm-houses, the dwelling of a young widow at Torquay, the cottage of an old spinster at Southsea, and the retreat of a knight's lady at Clifton. My brother and I both agreed that we preferred the farmhouses to any of the other "Homes." The wives of the beneficed clergymen were too fond of obliging us, under the plea of "healthy exercise," to help the gardener or the groom, and one sacerdotal lady tried to make us clean the knives, but George threw them down the well, and though we preferred sitting sideways for several days afterwards, we were never entrusted with the cleansing of the family cutlery again. The widow at Torquay I remember with some degree of admiration. From certain facts, which came to my knowledge many years afterwards, I have reason to believe that she was what Uncle Philip called "a hay widow," or a bereaved one, whose grass was cut and dried. She was very pretty, had a large acquaintance with most of the male idlers in Torquay, and drank a good deal of champagne, but she never gave us even gingerbeer. The old spinster at Southsea was long in the tooth, but very short with her rations. I was glad to get back to Tadcaster House after her hospitality, and Heaven knows that the fare at the Blackheath School was not as plentiful as that which greeted the return of the Prodigal. As to the knight's lady at Clifton, she was so very refined that she fed us principally on bread-and-butter shavings, which she called *tartines*, and on shreds of German sausage. To do her justice, she always partook of this meagre diet herself—at least

before us—though she carried enough flesh to have ballasted a twenty-ton yacht. I think she must have fattened herself on brandy. At least I know she was always consuming an amber liquid, which she said was toast-and-water. When her back was turned one day George and I sampled the mixture. It nearly burned away our tonsils as we swallowed it—we never did again. Now, the farmers' wives were jolly, good-natured women.* They gave us the run of every department of their establishments, from the orchards to the hen-runs, and from the dairies to the dungheaps. Perhaps some hypercritical reader may wonder at this gastronomic jeremiad, but boys are only young animals, whose most vivid recollections, like those of City Aldermen, are connected with food and drink. And so, I make bold to assert, is it with virginal blossoms. I remember seeing a pallid, weasel-figured damsel at a school-feast—she was the eighth daughter of one of our Vicaresses. Right under the eyes of the rural Dean she wolfed so much cake and so many buns, and gulped down so much tea, that his reverence, an observant man, observed to our hostess—

“Your little girl has a wonderful appetite.”

“Oh no, indeed,” replied the fond mamma indignantly, “but she’s so short-sighted that she can’t see when she’s had enough.”

While I was at Blackheath the Wicked Uncle came from time to time to see me, and always treated me most kindly, taking me for strolls to Woolwich and Shooter’s Hill, or rambles in Greenwich Park, where he pointed me out the famous hill, down which, he said, in former days the youthful fair used to roll

when playing a game called "Perchance." He seemed to regret the abolition of this pastime by the park authorities. It was during one of these walks that he told me an astounding piece of news, namely, that Aunt Penelope was wedded to our former tutor, Mr Cornelius Flaherty.

"Married to *him*?" I exclaimed. "Oh! it can't be true. She's so old, and he's such a cad!"

"It is true all the same," said the Wicked Uncle. "Old fiddles often like young bows. And what's more, your new great-uncle has taken the name of MacWashington, by the special wish of your great-aunt." Here he whistled softly to himself, "The Lass that Loves a Sailor," and I could see by his manner that he meant to drop the subject.

Soon after this I left Tadcaster House for ever. I was to go to Eton after the holidays (those by the way spent with the pretty widow of Torquay), and as I had been carefully crammed by the Rev. Jenkin Williams with the rudiments of Latin verse, I was presented by him on leaving with a brand new *Gradus ad Parnassum*. Why learned authorities of the College of the Blessed Virgin at Eton by Windsor should have insisted for centuries, and probably insist now, upon gathering together so many embryo Virgils, Ovids, and Horaces into their classic fold is a problem which I have never been able to determine. Why a small boy, with possibly a bent for modern languages, as I had, should be rigorously forced into composing dead-language doggerel is an incomprehensible anomaly. But then, even now, I am barbarian enough to dislike Latin Odes and Greek Plays, even in chalk-pits.

I left Tadcaster House without having made any

strong friendship among my schoolfellows, or having acquired much knowledge, but I had learned to play cricket, football, and hockey, accomplishments not unreasonably acquired at £100 a year. I was sorry to part from Mr Jenkin Williams, and so I truly believe was he from me.

After the holidays, the Wicked Uncle fetched me from Torquay. He and the widow seemed to get on very well together, and I saw them discussing a bottle of champagne conjointly in her pretty arbour, where about the spring flowers were carpeting the pastures. They did not see me as I approached the summer-house. I heard the lady exclaim—"O Captain Franklyn! What sad rakes you sailors are!"

"Rakes!" repeated Uncle Philip, "rakes! no, no! we've no time for gardening."

"At all events," said the lady, "I hope you'll soon come and look at my garden again!"

"By Aaron's rod!" cried my uncle, "that I will, the more so because, when I've landed Master Jack at Eton, I shall have to come back and plant Master George on to the *Britannia* at Dartmouth, and——" Here he became aware of my presence, and had a violent fit of coughing. I thought some of the bubbles of the champagne must have gone down the wrong way of his throat.

The widow lady and George saw us off at the station, and the former said to me, as we got into the train: "Always, Jack, be kind and grateful to your dear uncle, so kind, so good, so generous!"

I did not make answer, but the Wicked Uncle seemed particularly pleased, and he shook hands with her warmly, saying "*Au revoir à bientôt.*" As to George, he was as stolid as ever.

When we were fairly started Uncle Philip observed, "Mrs Sharraton's a very nice woman."

"Mrs Sharraton?" I said; "who's Mrs Sharraton?"

"By Aaron's rod!" he cried pettishly, "what an ass I am! Mrs Sharraton's nobody you know. I was thinking of something."

Let me here state that Mrs Sharraton was none other than the young widow. But when we knew her at Torquay she was known as Mrs Singleton-Smith. I felt sure that the Wicked Uncle's remark referred to the "hay widow," but my relative relapsed into a brown study, and I did not care to question him. But there is a touch of the parrot in my nature, and the less I said the more I thought.

We got to Windsor the next day, the Wicked Uncle having fitted me out with what he called "a regulation topper" and several "Eton suits," as advertised. Driving down to Eton Uncle Philip favoured me with one of his short quarter-deck homilies.

"Look here, Master Jack," he said, "it's no good trying to teach you what you won't learn for years. But remember what I told you when you went to Blackheath, and remember another thing. You'll be told by a lot of quill-drivers, who get gander-marrow in their pens, that boys are sent to Eton to be made gentlemen. Maybe that is the case with some of the whelps of the Merchant Service. But you're born a gentleman, and you're going to Eton to prove that you'll become a man without needing any more gentility than that which you inherited—and here we are at your dame's!"

The fly drew up at the door of a rather dingy-looking house, surrounded by shrubberies. In answer

to the summons of the jarvey, a portly butler, with a bald head, and a lean footman, with plenteous red hair, appeared on the threshold.

The Wicked Uncle enquired for Mr Magoy.

The fat butler bowed, and waved to the lean footman, after enquiring, "Luggage off, sir?"

"Certainly," replied the Wicked Uncle, and then to me he added, "Now, you shall see your dame."

"My dame" turned out to be, not a lady, but a benevolent-looking clergyman, the Rev. William Magoy. He had formerly been an assistant-master, but his health giving way, he gave up teaching and restricted his energies to the administration of his boarding-house—or, rather, he did not, for Mr Magoy was an Egyptologist, and spent nearly all his days in writing controversial pamphlets on the subject of the Pharaohs, and other ancient dwellers by the Nile. As these works commanded but a limited sale, and as they were published in most expensive style, with plenty of coloured illustrations, I am afraid that "my dame" spent a good deal of money as well as time in their production. He was a married man with a large family, but Mrs Magoy had too much to do in her own nursery to busy herself with the boys. Consequently, our wants were superintended by Miss Winks, a lady housekeeper of middle age, who, it was currently reported, had once been jilted by a duke. Whether this was true or not I know not, but all her leisure moments were passed in studying Burke's "Peerage" and "Landed Gentry," so that when any new boy of gentle birth arrived at my dame's, Miss Winks was better posted, perhaps, in his family history than the lad himself. She immediately let me know that she knew I was the grandson of that world-

famed diplomatist, Lord MacWashington. Uncle Philip, having squeezed my fist with his flipper, refused Mr. Magoy's offer of refreshment, and, presently I, with a slight quaking, heard the wheels of his fly rolling over the gravel Windsorwards. Mr. Magoy, having to finish a treatise on the Use of the Scarabæus, as an article of devotional ornament, rang the bell, and told the red-haired footman to take me to Miss Winks. This individual, no doubt out of rhyming compliment to the matron, was always addressed as "Jinks" by us, while the stout butler was, for a similar reason, invariably called "Drinks." Miss Winks, after a few words of welcome, took me upstairs, and I presently found myself in a small room, containing two turn-up bedsteads, a table cupboard, and two Eton bureaux, or "burries." She explained that this was one of the double rooms usually occupied by two brothers, but in my case I was to share it with Lord Charles Larkhall, third son of the Marquis of Earlybird, also a newcomer. She then summoned Sarah, the Pleiocene boys' maid, on our passage, and bade her summon the young nobleman, whom she had espied unpacking a hamper outside the door. His lordship was a long slip of a boy, with a freckled face and sandy hair. He shook me dubiously by the hand, but his mouth was too full of cake to allow of his speaking, until Miss Winks had left us together. When he got command of his jaws he asked: "Have you brought any apricot jam?"

I answered in the negative, and added that I had been provided with no eatables at all.

"That's bad," he said, "I like apricot jam. I'll toss you for a pot. Now then, 'man' or 'woman.' You cry."

I didn't quite understand what he meant, but I boldly said "Woman."

"It's a man!" cried Larkhall, without allowing me to see the shilling which he had flipped into the air, and caught in his hand. "You go and get the jam."

I demurred to this, the errand being no part of the bargain. Now Larkhall had been at a private school, where every boy was destined for Eton, and where all the masters had been at Eton. Consequently it was a miniature edition of the great school, and Eton phrases and customs passed current in everyday life.

On my declining to fetch the jam, his lordship exclaimed: "Will you fight me, or take a licking?"

At Tadcaster House I had been very handy with the gloves in the gymnasium, so, greatly to Larkhall's astonishment, I hit him on the nose, saying, "Take that!"

He reeled back, and fell over the table, but picked himself up again and rushed at me, but I was ready for him, and dodging the blow he aimed at my eye, again hit him on the nose, whence this time there poured a copious red stream. Larkhall pulled a dirty white handkerchief out of his pocket, threw it in the air, picked it up again, held it to his injured feature and rushed for the basin. When the bleeding had nearly stopped he blurted out: "You're nippy with your knuckles. Give me the money and I'll get the jam. I know the way to Webber's. Been there dozens of times with Waternest—he's my Major."

"May I come too?" I asked.

"Of course," he replied; "and we'll look out some pictures for the room at Runicles."

That little episode of the apricot-jam combat cemented our friendship for life.

After we had been examined in Upper School, I took Middle Fourth Form, and Larkhall, Lower Fourth. I should mention that my tutor was Mr Wagstaff, one of the younger assistant masters, and that Larkhall joined me in the same gentleman's pupil room. Mr Wagstaff had a house of his own, and was a singularly kind and learned man, but he did not know how to manage boys. The consequence was, that we used to play him the most impudent tricks, as indeed did all the members of his school-division. I shall never forget the first appearance of Larkhall and myself in our tutor's room. Mr Wagstaff had not yet come in, and of course we were immediately surrounded by a crowd of lower boys who plied us with the usual questions, "Where do you board?" "Where do you come from?" "Is Waggy your tutor?" and similar enquiries. Having exhausted these queries, one of our tormentors perceived my hat, which alas! was not according to Eton fashion. "Hallo!" he cried, "Did you borrow this from the Dean of Windsor? I don't like the lining, it ought to be black." So saying, he poured a bottle of ink into the unfortunate topper, and placed it on our tutor's table. I was furious, and was about to make a rush for my property, when the door opened and Mr Wagstaff entered. He was very short-sighted, and as usual had mislaid his spectacles. Seeing a hat on his table, he naturally picked it up and asked, "Whose is this?" at the same time turning the hat over. In an instant his right sleeve was drenched with the black fluid. Dashing my unfortunate head-covering on to the floor, he screamed rather than

shouted—"Whose hat is that? I insist upon knowing. Unless I know at once, I'll have you *all* flogged!" I approached the table with great trepidation. "It's mine, sir," I said in a low voice.

Mr Wagstaff was shaking the ink out of his sleeve. "Yours!" he echoed; "yours, and who may you be?"

"Franklyn, sir," I answered.

"Franklyn! Franklyn! One of my own pupils, and a new boy too. How is it possible, sir, that you have dared to commit the enormity?"

In an instant the cruelty of my position came to me. I could not in all honour give away the facts.

"Come, sir," said Mr Wagstaff impatiently, stamping his foot. "Answer me at once!"

"It was an accident," I faltered.

"An accident!" repeated Mr Wagstaff, fairly staggered.

"The bottle——" I began lamely, and stopped. Mr Wagstaff himself came to my assistance. "Oh, I understand, the bottle broke in your hat. Franklyn, remember in future, that hats are not made to carry ink bottles in. I forgive you, Franklyn, I forgive you. And now, boys, while I am changing my coat and shirt, look about for the pieces of the broken phial—very dangerous thing broken glass." And you, Gregory, tell Rumbelow to mop up this mess," he added, to the very youth who was the cause of the mischief.

"Yes, sir," replied Gregory with the air of a holy innocent; "shall we throw the pieces of glass away when we've found them?"

"Certainly, Gregory, certainly," and Mr Wagstaff hurried through the green baize door. Scarcely had

he closed 'it when a simultaneous shout of laughter arose from all the boys except myself. I looked wrathfully at Gregory, but he came forward with an outstretched hand. "You've behaved like a brick," he said, "and I'm very sorry."

"Hear, hear!" cried the other young rascals.

I shook. As you will learn, ever since, Gregory has been one of my truest and best friends. There are Three Musketeers and a d'Artagnan, in this true story to-day. They are Reginald Gregory, Charles Larkhall, Anthony Fuller, and John Franklyn, but it would be difficult for any one to say who were the Musketeers, and who was d'Artagnan.

After Mr Wagstaff had released us, I was starting hatless to my dame's with Larkhall, when Gregory came running after us with a small piece of paper in his hand. "Here," he panted, holding out the paper to me; "I've just been and told Mrs Wagstaff everything. She, dear lady, won't peach, and she's given me an order for a new hat. All you've got to do, is to go up to Devereux's and get a new one. And, don't be offended, Franklyn, but your clothes ain't quite up to Eton form. Get your matron to give you an order for some new togs at Denman's or Brown's."

"Will she give me orders?" I asked dubiously, not knowing this system of "chits," as they have it, not only at Eton, but in the Far East.

"Of course she will," replied Gregory.

"Then here goes," I cried, tearing up the hat order, for which he had, like a good fellow, run the risk of the block.

"You'll do, Franklyn," said Gregory, "but I must sock you and Larkhall at Bryan's."

And it was at the hand-cart of old Bryan, the walking-stick carver, eating ices, that we cemented the new Triple Alliance.

I was very happy that first half (not then called term) at Eton. I had an excellent fag-master—Garston, the second captain of the House. Fagging, in a school like Eton at all events, is the finest institution in the world. The lower boys look up to their masters as their natural lords and protectors, just as the squires and pages did to the knights of old, and every worthy fag-master knows his responsibility. Both Larkhall and myself were "swished" before the holidays. The matter was in this wise. Just under the window of our room was a small yard connected with the kitchen door, having a large flag-stone in front of it. Now we were at war with the cook for this reason. It was an unwritten law that, if any boy was training for a boat-race, the cook must dress a steak or chop for his breakfast. Larkhall determined to take advantage of this custom, and one fine day, having bought a fine piece of tender loin, he boldly carried it to "Cookie," and requested her to prepare it for us.

"What race are you in for?" enquired the cook.

"Pairs in 'the Race of Life,'" returned Larkhall with all assurance, and left the kitchen. Unluckily Miss Winks was in the adjoining larder, and overheard his lordship's remark. She promptly explained matters to the culinary deity, who was furious at having been sold. So when Miss Winks had gone back to "Burke's Peerage," she waited a whole hour, and then returned the steak quite raw, but covered with layers of mustard. "This," she sent word by

Jinks, "was the proper way of cooking steaks for those entered in the Race of Life."

Larkhall and I swore to be revenged. He was a boy of great ingenuity, and after some thought suggested "a Cookie bait." The scheme was carried out with triumphant effect. It was as follows: We bought several yards of stout rope, cut it into four lengths, and carefully twisted fine wire round the lines about half-way up. We then got four of the flat brass candlesticks, which we used; two were our own, two were borrowed. These we smeared plentifully with a horrible mixture of assafoetida and treacle, and attached them to the wired ends of the ropes. We had ascertained from Jinks that Miss Winks had given our enemy leave to entertain some friends on the particular evening, when we had completed our preparations. Scarcely had conviviality established itself, when, with a horrible clang, bang went the four candlesticks on the flagstone outside the kitchen door, and commenced dancing the devil's tattoo. Out came the cook, followed by her friends, to ascertain what caused this deafening din. On perceiving the instruments of torture the cook and her companions rushed indoors, and reappeared, armed with knives. This was precisely what we anticipated. Calling down in mocking voices "Pretty Cookie! Pretty Cookie!" we allowed our assailants to grip the besmeared candlesticks, while they vainly hacked away at the wired cords, the other ends of which we had tied to the bars of our window. There were frightful imprecations from below, and not only we, but the boys on both passages, were intensely enjoying this Homeric fray, when a voice ascended in the darkness.

It said: "Come down at once, you filthy fellows, Larkhall and Franklyn."

It was that of Mr Magoy!

We went down, not only that evening but next morning in another place, in presence of the Headmaster.

CHAPTER SIXTH

SOME ETON EXPERIENCES

MY first holidays from Eton I again spent with George at pretty Mrs Sharraton's (for so she now styled herself) house at Torquay, but the Wicked Uncle did not come to see us, having been suddenly ordered to the China Station. However he had certainly made all arrangements for our comfort with our hostess, who was as kind as possible, and we enjoyed ourselves thoroughly. What provision had been made for our maintenance with the Court of Chancery, or Aunt Penelope, we did not know, nor indeed did we care. George apparently liked the *Britannia* as much as I did Eton. As to Mrs Sharraton, she had more admirers than ever, but she seemed to have very few acquaintances among the *élite* of Torquay Society. George once asked her, with his usual bluntness, why she had so few lady friends. "I'm Hagar in the desert," she answered with a peculiar smile; "and I happen to have come across an Oasis where the female pelicans don't appreciate Hagars." With this enigmatical answer George had to be satisfied.

It is not my purpose to detail my life at Eton. I played cricket and football fairly well, and though I was incorrigibly lazy, I often, by a spurt of applica-

tion, managed to get the better in "Trials" and "Collections" over the most hard-working "saps" in my Division. Once I remember, when I had come out first in the latter examination, the master to whom I was up, the Rev. Archibald Phatley, paraded me before my colleagues, and, instead of congratulating me on my success, informed me that I had robbed more worthy boys of the prize due to their assiduity. I did not care sixpence about Mr Phatley's rebuke at the time, but since then I have often reflected that he was undoubtedly right. Though I always needed whip and spur to make me run up to my true form, I ought never to have been looked upon as an outsider, who sometimes managed to pull off a first-class handicap. As I began, so I am afraid I continued in after life.

One summer there occurred an adventure which I must relate, because it had a most important influence on my career. It was a brilliant day in June and a half-holiday, and Larkhall, who was always ready to transgress the rules of the school, suggested that we should shirk chapel and row up to Monkey Island. I fell in with his idea at once, and proposed that we should ask Gregory to join the expedition; but, I added, "what about the chapel and absence bills?" The latter I should explain, were the slips of paper prepared by the prepositors of the week, and inscribed with the names of boys not present at these functions. As a rule, some excuse, such as sickness, or leave off to visit friends, was forthcoming on enquiry from the authorities. "As to chapel," replied Larkhall, "that old bat, Blayrefield, is in desk just above where we sit, and we are not likely to be missed, being all three

on different benches. As to absence, I've found out that Blayrefield is also going to take on six o'clock absence, and if we can't get three of our friends to cry "Here, sir," and pull off their hats in the background of the Lower Boy crowd, we richly deserve to be swished."

The argument was specious in its way, and Gregory readily fell in with our plan. Nor was it difficult to find understudies, who, for certain considerations, *e.g.* coffee and buttered buns at Brown's, a set of Nicaraguan stamps, or a pair of fives gloves, consented to represent us when challenged by the purblind Blayrefield. The only risk we ran was that the præpostors might be over zealous, but on a glorious afternoon such as this, we surmised, with a fine intuition of human nature, that they would be anxious to get through their work as quickly as possible. As usual, Larkhall was the leader on this occasion. He had a natural aptitude for running risks without being found out. He it was who discovered that the small volumes, known as "Beadle's American Library," exactly fitted the covers of the copies of Hymns, Ancient and Modern, used in the College Chapel. He too must be credited with the idea of storing bottled beer in a secret compartment beneath the flower-box which decorated our window sill, and in his brain was conceived the notion of employing some poor scholar, whom he had met up Windsor, to write our Latin verse and prose at sixpence a copy. A scheme which he attempted, of having a lending library of "cribs," to be issued to subscribers at five shillings a term, was defeated solely by the dishonesty of most of his patrons, who indeed borrowed the books, but neither returned them nor paid the subscriptions.

The "Crib" Lending Library had therefore to suspend business.

Monkey Island is, of all spots on the Thames, the one most eagerly sought after by enterprising Eton boys, for it is practically impossible to row there and back, without shirking some necessary function. The relish which this fact inspired in the breast of an Etonian law-breaker, was in my time only equalled by surreptitious pilgrimages to Windsor Steeplechases, or Ascot Races. On the day in question the voyage had been accomplished without let or hindrance. As far as Surley, we had not been without apprehension that we should encounter the punt-loving Mr Sculley, or the out-riggered Mr Dicks, or the uncompromising Mr Hardman in his skiff, but none of these magisterial men of the pole and oar had crossed our watery way. Our long and splendid row was crowned with shandy-gaff and bread and cheese, and as we lay on the grass outside the quaintly decorated inn dedicated to the Simian race, we sniffed with uncommon pleasure the fragrance of the coming hay-crops on either bank, and carelessly, but thankfully withal, looked upon the blue river, the gay flowers, and the green trees brightening in the sunbeams, and softly stirred by the refreshing breeze. We stretched ourselves for fully half-an-hour, and then Gregory, who always possessed an excellent thirst, proposed more shandy-gaff. The motion was carried *nem. con.* We rose and entered the hotel bar and ordered more refreshment. There were several parties of boating people scattered about, and I noticed two steam launches, not very common craft in those days, lying alongside the camp shedding of the landing-place. As I was about to grasp the pewter containing my foaming draught, it was

suddenly removed from my reach by an arm stretched over my shoulder, while a voice exclaimed—

“That’s mine, young feller!”

I turned angrily, but burst out laughing as my gaze lighted on the merry, impudent visage of Mr Anthony Fuller, who was quietly consuming my beverage. His eyes twinkled above the rim of the pot, but he never removed it from his lips till he drained the last drop, when he set it down on the counter with a sigh of deep content.

“Young feller,” he then said, offering his hand, “I’m glad to see you, but at the same time, I beg to remark that I imagined you to be prosecuting your diplomatic studies at Eton College, whereas I find you consuming your valuable time, without mentioning shandy-gaff, in a public-house. Your conduct grieves me, John Franklyn, so much so, that I am seriously considering whether I ought not to despatch a mounted messenger to inform the Provost and Fellows of Eton of your dissipated habits, but, in consideration of your hitherto unblemished character, I invite you and these companions in your vice, to join me in quaffing to the health of the Queen.”

Larkhall and Gregory had been listening to this harangue with curious expressions. And no wonder, for there was, and is, only one Anthony Fuller.

“Present me,” continued Tony, “for I make it a rule never to drink with strangers, save and except bishops, bargees, policemen, and tramps. You do not appear to me, young fellers, to come under that category. I therefore beg of you, John Franklyn, Esquire, to make me known to your honourable comrades.”

I readily complied in quite courtly style—"Mr Reginald Gregory—Mr Anthony Fuller. Mr Anthony Fuller—Mr Reginald Gregory. Lord Charles Larkhall—Mr Anthony Fuller. Mr Anthony Fuller—Lord Charles Larkhall."

Anthony Fuller raised his straw hat (he was in boating costume) and swept the floor with it three times. "Gentlemen," he said, with one of his peculiar grins, "your most obedient; I am proud to meet you. Mr Gregory, may I enquire without presumption, what does your esteemed father, Sir Rupert, think of *Bluejacket's* chance for next year's Derby? My Lord Charles, I trust that the most honourable, the Marquis of Earlybird, has benefited by the Waters of Aix-les-Bains. In what liquid may I ask you to pledge their healths?—Fizz, gooseberry, B. and S., gingerbeer, whisky, or sherbet?"

Both Reggie and Charlie were too astonished to answer, but I said, "Shandy-gaff."

"Shandy-gaff let it be," cried Tony, "the mixture of the Kentish hop and the West Indian root. Drink hearty!" he said, as we raised the pewters to our lips. We drank, and then Anthony proceeded in more sober strain, "Jack Franklyn, there are two friends of yours sitting outside."

"Who are they?" I asked.

"Mrs Bottlestrap and——" he paused. "Her lovely niece, Tabitha."

"Tabby?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, young feller," he said, "and they'll be pleased to see you. Come along. Back in a minute," he added to Larkhall and Gregory, as he passed his arm through mine, and led me on to the sward. Mrs Bottlestrap was seated on a campstool under a tree,

drinking bottled stout. Her countenance was even more resplendent than on the last occasion when I had looked upon it. It now reminded me of some pictures I had seen of the Midnight Sun off the North Cape of Norway. She was dressed in a white serge yachting suit, embroidered with gold braid, and on her amber locks was perched a scarlet peaked cap displaying a gold anchor.

"Lor' bless my soul!" she puffed, "if it ain't Master Jack Franklyn! And 'ow's Master George and 'ow's the captain, gone to live upon puppy-dog-pies and bird's-nest soup, among them willainous Chinese?" She was about to embrace me, but remembering the red paint marks when we left her hotel, I drew back, and said: "Quite well, thank you."

"Well," she continued, "this is a surprise! Me and Tony Fuller, and one or two more and Tabby, is steaming on the river, all among the water-lilies, forget-me-nots, and bulrushes. Ah! there's Tabby! Tabby, Tabby, come here!" she called out, as a lithe figure in pink, escorted by two young fellows in flannels, emerged from the shrubs. "Tabby! Tabby! here's Mr John Franklyn."

Tabby came running forward, and I couldn't help noticing that although she was of the same age as myself, she appeared nearly grown up, while I was still but a boy.

Before I could prevent her, Tabby had flung her arms round my neck, and was greeting me with abundant kisses. I felt humiliated, the more so when I heard Mrs Bottlestrap say in a stage whisper, "Ain't she fond of him?" and Anthony Fuller reply, "It's a clear case of always remembered—to memory ever dear." But though I shook myself clear of

Tabby's embraces, I felt a secret delight in the warmth of her salutation. She was certainly growing a most beautiful girl, but I was too ill at ease to respond to the pretty prattle with which she immediately bombarded me. Happily in a few minutes I was hailed by a shout of "Frank-lyn, Frank-lyn!" and saw Gregory and Larkhall beckoning to me. I knew that it was time to be off, and so, confusedly, to Mrs Bottlestrap and her party, I turned away without so much as speaking to Tabby, being afraid that in the presence of my companions she would repeat her previous osculatory performance.

"I'll see you to your skiff," said Tony, as I hurried away.

When we got to the bank the man in charge of the boats was attending to a gig, so we sat down under the willows. Scarcely had we done so, when, just above us, there was a scream, and a shout of "Help! Help!" and, almost instantaneously, something white was being whirled down stream. I sprang into the water, and clutched hold of some flimsy material, attached, as I could feel, to a little light frame, evidently human. I turned on my back, clasped the body to my breast, and by dint of powerful legstrokes — I was a good swimmer — managed to reach the shore. As I did so a hand grasped my hair and landed me panting on the grass, but still holding my fragile burden. The hand was that of Anthony Fuller; the white something I had rescued was a lovely girl-child, nine or ten years old. Her golden hair was matted together, her face pale as bleached wax, her eyelids closed. As I rose to my feet dripping, but really none the worse for my ducking, a tall man burst through the small crowd which had

collected, and picked up the little girl in his arms.

"My darling! My darling!" he exclaimed piteously, and bore her off, followed by every one except Anthony Fuller, Larkhall, Gregory, and myself.

"Bravo! young feller!" said Tony. "Bravo! Come and have some brandy, and get a change of clothes."

The practical mind of Larkhall grasped the danger of the situation.

"Good Heavens!" he cried excitedly; "don't you know who that man is?"

"No," I answered. "I suppose it's the little girl's father."

"Right you are," said Charlie. "He is the Duke of Middlesex, and if you want us all to be swished and turned down, wait till he comes back, for he's sure to come back and find out who you are."

"What's to be done?" I asked.

"Hook it—do a guy, if you don't want to be known. You're rather damp, but, here, take my flask. There's not a soul within hail, and you can make tracks before they come back from the hotel." Thus spoke Anthony.

"You're right," exclaimed Gregory. "You row, Jack. That'll dry you. Why on earth should these stupid kids fall into the water and spoil our fun?"

"Young feller," observed Anthony Fuller, "if you never fall into anything worse than water, I'll eat my waistcoat, sandwiched between my trousers and my jacket."

We cast off, and in a few minutes Anthony Fuller and Monkey Island had disappeared from our view. I did not consider that I had done any very

meritorious action, nor did my companions. The only thing that alarmed us was the thought that by this untoward incident our expedition might come to the cognizance of the "Head."

"Take my word for it," said Larkhall sagaciously, "we've not heard the last of this. That confounded, meddling duke, not content with having his daughter's life saved—I know she was alive, for I could see her breathing—will want to find out all about us. Some ass will suggest that we're Eton chaps, and he'll put a search party on. I hope that rum friend of yours, Jack, won't blow the gaff."

"Not he," I answered; "he's the best fellow in the world. How jolly lucky there's such a strong sun; my things are nearly dry."

"Let this be a warning to you, Jack," put in Gregory after a pause. "Never again go diving into rivers after dunderheaded damsels."

"She wasn't dunderheaded," I retorted hotly, "but very pretty, with golden hair."

"A fat lot golden hair will help you when the tugs are pulling up your shirt tails," sneered Larkhall, rather brutally. "And your conduct, remember, doesn't affect you only, but us, too."

"That's so," added Gregory, I thought bitterly.

"I'm very sorry," I said humbly; "and I hope you won't quarrel with me about the matter."

"Not we, old man!" cried Larkhall cheerfully; "only we must keep quiet tongues in our heads."

"Agreed," said Gregory and myself together.

"Well, pull on hard," replied Larkhall, "or we shall be late for lock-up."

We got back to the Brocas in safety, and Charlie and I, and, of course, Gregory got back to our respec-

tive houses in time for nightly incarceration. After answering to my name in the passage under the staircase, I ran upstairs to change my clothes, which, though no longer wet, were green with bits of clinging weed. As I took off my shirt, something fell with a jingling noise upon the floor. It was a small gold-chain bracelet, fastened at the clasp with a pink coral hand, round the wrist of which was a tiny ring, set with turquoises and pearls. It must have fallen off the arm of the child when she was lying on my breast as I brought her ashore. The sight of this ornament filled me with apprehension. What was I to do with it? If I sent it to the duke he would infallibly discover our identity. If I kept it I should be a thief. Should I consult Charlie or Reggie? No, they would certainly advise me to throw it into the Thames. And as I gazed upon the fragile bracelet, it brought to my mind the vision of that fair little white-robed angel, whom I had taken from the rushing stream. A sudden resolution came across me. I said to myself, "I will tell no one, but will keep it until I meet the owner herself; then I will restore it." And I did. The next day I bought a wash-leather purse, wherein I put the coral hand and the chain. Through mirth and sadness, through prosperity and ill-luck, it remained there for years, and it was ever my talisman for good, my antidote against temptation; but, alas! only when I remembered its existence in time.

Larkhall's prophecy was as perfectly correct as his plan of campaign. Our absence had not been discovered, but two days after our expedition there was read out in every division at eleven o'clock: "All boys are to remain in the schoolyard, form by form, to-day, after two o'clock absence; and will be drawn

up in lines reaching from cloisters to the school gates."

"I told you so," grumbled Larkhall. "We're done, Master Jack, we're done."

"Two to one on it," put in Gregory; "it's a moral certainty."

I need scarcely say that every boy in the school, except ourselves, wondered what was going to happen. All sorts of wild theories were propounded. Some maintained that the Queen was going to drive through the school-yard; others that some one had been stealing swans' eggs from Ditton Park, and that the Duke of Buccleuch was going to prosecute the offender, while a third party was sure that we were to be examined by a body of doctors specially sent from London to ascertain if we had all been vaccinated within the last seven years. Larkhall, despite the knowledge of our guilt, started a theory of his own, to wit, that the Astronomer-Royal wished to ascertain by measurement how many boys, placed end on end, would reach to the moon. He had at least a score of adherents.

On this eventful day, after the names had been duly called, the Head-master, from the steps of the chapel, addressed us as follows (I take the report from the *Eton Chronicle*), after having politely motioned a gentlemen, in whom I recognised the Duke of Middlesex, to stand by his side. He said: "You will, no doubt, be surprised at being summoned to wait after absence, but circumstances demand your attendance. On Thursday afternoon, or perhaps I should say evening, between five and six, his Grace the Duke of Middlesex" (here he bowed to his companion, who lifted his hat), "accompanied by a family

party, visited Monkey Island on a steam-launch. During his sojourn there, his Grace's little daughter, Lady Beatrice Belleisle, while trying to gather a flower on the bank, fell into the river, and was carried down by the stream. She was gallantly rescued by a boy, who plunged into the river and brought her to land." (*Cheers from the auditors.*) "The Duke in his natural anxiety and excitement, only thinking of the life of his dear child happily preserved" (*renewed cheers*), "did not even thank her preserver at the moment. All he noticed was that three lads, one of them dripping with water, were, when he bore his daughter to the hotel, standing on the grass. On ascertaining that Lady Beatrice had received no injury, his Grace hurried back to express his thanks" ("Warm and heartfelt thanks," put in the Duke—*Cheers*) "to her intrepid rescuer, but the boys had disappeared. From enquiries made by his Grace, he came to the conclusion that the preserver of his daughter's life and the two others must have been students at Eton. I have pointed out to the Duke that at such a time it would be impossible, under our rules, that any of you boys could be so far away as Monkey Island. Such a grave breach of discipline would not be concomitant with the discipline of the College. The boatman of the Island" ("Curse him!" muttered Larkhall, who stood beside me), "was positive as to their identity. I have very carefully examined all the bills of the day, and I find no shred of proof that, with the exception of those boys, whose absence during the afternoon is satisfactorily explained, any of you could have been at Monkey Island" (*Cheers.*) "Unfortunately the boatman is too ill to be present at this unusual

THE SCARLET CITY

enquiry, but happily we possess an independent witness, a gentleman, who saw the whole incident. But before bringing him before you, I ask—Were any boys guilty of such grave dereliction of duty? Let them stand forth, and I will temper justice with mercy!"

There was a dead silence. Gregory whispered *sotto voce*, "I know your merciful justice. Not for me, thank you."

"No answer!" continued the "Head." "Then here is the gentleman to whom I referred." *

He stepped on one side, and to our horror revealed the person of Anthony Fuller, faultlessly attired in a glossy hat and, for him, singularly dark suit.

"Does any boy recognise this gentleman?"

Again a dead silence, broken only by the savage and suppressed exclamation of Larkhall—"He's sold us after all!"

"Now," went on the "Head," "as you cannot identify him, perhaps he may turn the tables by identifying *you*. In the frankest way he has promised the Duke and myself every possible assistance." ("The dirty cur!" whispered Gregory). "You will draw up in line, form by form, according to your respective divisions. The assistant masters have their instructions."

"We'd better bolt," said Larkhall hoarsely.

"We can't," whispered Gregory, mournfully, "they've shut the school gates."

"He won't betray us, I know," I said hotly, "Tony's too good a chap."

I shall never forget the scene. It was like a review at Aldershot, when the duke and the Headmaster, armed with a school list, passed slowly down the lines of bare-headed boys, each form headed by two or three masters. Anthony Fuller examined

every one on parade with the attention of an inspecting general. I trembled as he paused opposite to me, but not a sign of recognition did he give, other than a slight droop of the left eyelid as he paraded onwards, the Head-master the while ticking off the names. This singular inspection took a good half-hour. At the close, the "Head" re-ascended the steps, and said: "I am glad to say that Mr Fuller has confirmed my own theory. No Eton boy was at Monkey Island on Thursday. The gallant and modest lad, who rescued Lady Beatrice, must be sought for elsewhere."

Then he shook hands heartily with the Duke of Middlesex and Anthony Fuller. We gave three cheers for everybody, including Tony, who raised his hat with a radiant smile, worthy of a member returned to Parliament, on the declaration of the poll.

Later on, as Larkhall, Gregory, and myself, were speeding up the High Street towards the Brocas, we saw Anthony Fuller standing in the doorway of the Christopher.

"Come in, young fellers," he said heartily, "and have some more shandy-gaff. You'd all have been dead men if that boatman had turned up. He came to give evidence, but——" here he hesitated.

"Well, where is he?" I asked anxiously.

"The last I saw of him," answered Tony calmly, "was when I put him, dead drunk, on a guano barge bound for Rotherhithe, at six o'clock this morning. He wanted some kippering too," he added reflectively.

When we had followed him into the hostelry, I was disagreeably reminded by Anthony's remarks of the existence of Tabby, the while I was thinking only of Lady Beatrice and the Coral Hand.

CHAPTER SEVENTH

STILL AT ETON

HERE are a few more Eton memories. One Football Half, Larkhall suggested that we should give private theatricals in our room. As the apartment in question was about sixteen feet by twelve, the proposition appeared somewhat absurd, and I pointed out there would be but little room for the audience, much less for the stage.

"That's all you know about it," he said. "What I propose to do, is to lay the two bedsteads long-ways. There's our stage. What say you?"

I had, what is called, a theatrical turn of mind, and was charmed with the arrangement.

"Now," continued Charlie, "you're a bit of a dab at writing plays. You'll give us a brand new farce, with plenty of songs in it."

I had commenced a burlesque on *Hamlet*, and had perpetrated two or three wretched ditties, which met with high approval from my schoolfellows, though they were but sorry stuff. However, no dramatic author ever refuses a commission, so I accepted the responsibility.

"And I," continued Larkhall, "will paint the scenery!"

"Paint the scenery!" I cried. "Do you know anything about it?"

"Leave that to me," he answered evasively. "We'll go up Windsor this afternoon, and get the paint-brushes and canvas. I've got nearly a fiver left of the governor's tip, and I don't suppose it'll run to that."

"But where are you going to paint? Where's your studio?" I enquired, amazed at his knowledge of the fine arts.

"Where else but here," he said calmly, as he waved his hand grandiloquently round our Lilliput lodging. "What scenes do you want? A country lane, and a drawing-room. Will that suit you?"

"Perfectly," I answered humbly, "but I haven't written the piece yet."

"That doesn't matter a bit," he said. "Let's get the scenery done first. I'll just draw up a list of the paints I shall want. Blue, green, red, yellow, and so on."

I was astounded, for Larkhall never took any drawing-lessons, and his taste in pictures ran very much to hunting sketches, and prints of meets of foxhounds. However, there was no doubt but that he was in earnest, and that very day we entered an oil-and-colour shop in Pescod Street, Windsor.

"I want these paints," said Larkhall to the man behind the counter, handing over the list, which he had prepared.

"Oil paints, sir?" asked the shopman.

"Of course," cried Larkhall testily. "I want something that will stick, not wash off like water-colour."

Having paid for the colours, and also for some brushes, and told the man where to send them, Larkhall next invaded a linen-draper's and demanded fourteen yards of canvas.

"Is it for dressmaking purposes?" asked the draper.

"What the dickens has that got to do with you?" said Charlie rudely. "Let's see some samples of the stuff."

Having chosen some extremely thin material, used, I believe, for feminine yachting costumes, he directed the parcel to be despatched to Mr Magoy's as soon as possible, and swaggered out of the establishment, highly pleased with himself, though I fancy he had spent more than he intended to do.

"That's the way to do business," he exclaimed. "By Jove! I'll begin this very evening. I shall want some turpentine and size too. However, we can get that and some carpenter's pencils in Eton."

The materials were duly delivered, and after lock-up Charlie and I cut the canvas in half, and nailed the two picces on the walls. Charlie then opened all the paint-pots, poured the size into a slop-basin, and turned the turpentine into a sugar-basin.

"I'll begin on the Country Lane," he said, rolling up his sleeves, and after dipping his brush into the turpentine he proceeded to anoint one of the strips of canvas with some vivid green paint, splashing it and dashing it here and there, sparing neither carpet nor furniture.

"But you haven't drawn anything to work on," I ventured to remark.

"No, you fool!" he said; "I'm working in the background. You just let me alone. You write plays and I'll paint scenery."

The smell in the room was so atrocious that I felt glad of an excuse to clear out.

"All right," I said; "I'll go into Cracknell's room. If you want me you can sing out."

There were ventilators over all the doors in the passage, and when I got outside I perceived that the sickening odour was thickening and thickening every minute throughout the house.

"Hullo!" cried Cracknell, when I invaded his sanctum. "Can you explain where this beastly stink comes from?"

"Oh," I said, "it's only Larkhall painting. I dare say it will soon go off."

"Well, if it doesn't, I shall go and ask Larkhall to do his picture somewhere else. Pheugh! how nasty!"

Presently we heard doors slamming, and imprecations arising all along the passage, then footsteps hurried along towards our room; then murmurs floated along of a heated discussion, and finally the angry voice of Larkhall was heard exclaiming, "I'll do what I please in my room, and if any of you fellows come annoying me again, I'll dab this paint-brush in your faces!" Then the door slammed, and there were angry whispers. No one dared to openly declare war, for Larkhall was now the biggest and strongest boy in the house.

"Perhaps I'd better go and see what can be done," I said; "for I'm blowed if I want to sleep in that fetid atmosphere."

When I got back Charlie was still laying on green paint, and the smell was worse than ever. He turned fiercely round. "Oh! it's you, is it? If it had been Bellicoe Major, or that ass Tippy Smith, I'd have made him suffer for it."

The artist then began his labour again, and the carpet, from the drippings, was gradually assuming the

appearance of a grass plat. I opened the window, and pushed my head out as far as possible to avoid the noxious odours. Presently I became interested in some dispute which our enemy Cookie was carrying on in the yard with "Drinks," the butler. All of a sudden I was aroused by the voice of Larkhall, shouting:

"It's you, is it? I told you what I'd give you!"

I turned round, to behold Mr Magoy with a great verdant splash of paint across his forehead, and Larkhall standing aghast before him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he stammered. "I thought you were Ginger Smith."

"I readily understand, Lord Charles," said my dame, "that you were unaware of my presence, but that does not explain the state of things which I find in your room, nor the revolting odours, which have penetrated even into my study. What is the meaning of this scandalous sight?"

"Please, sir, I am scene-painting," replied Larkhall, getting back his equanimity.

"Scene-painting!" cried Mr Magoy. "Scene-painting! And, pray, may I ask, for what theatre are you engaged upon a work, which, as you must be aware, was deemed totally unnecessary by the Greck dramatists?"

He said this so gravely, with the fresh green paint covering his brow, that I nearly burst out laughing, especially when Charlie rejoined, with a magnificent sweep of his arm, just as he was so fond of doing when he wished to be impressive—

"This, sir, is our playhouse!"

Mr Magoy stared at Larkhall for a moment, as if doubting whether to ascribe his answer to insanity or

impertinence. But before he could say anything, Larkhall explained :

"Yes, sir, we, that is, Franklyn and myself, intend to have some private theatricals."

"You must be mad, both of you," cried my dame, mopping his forehead with his handkerchief, which, as the paint was still wet, was soon as green as Erin's Isle. "I have a strong inclination to have you both whipped, but as you have a partiality for the drama, you must, each of you, write out 'The Frogs' of Aristophanes. As to this rubbish," and he pointed contemptuously to Larkhall's art materials, "I will take care that it be removed to the dust-bin without delay, and this chamber thoroughly fumigated." With that he stalked majestically out, the green on his countenance being heavily mottled with indignant red.

I burst into a shout of laughter, but Charlie quivered with indignation.

"The old beast!" he growled. "I'd like to paint his bald head blue!"

"Well," I said, "you've given him a sign of spring he won't get rid of, for a day or two."

Then Jinks and Sarah appeared. The canvas was torn from the walls, and the brushes and paint-pots tossed into a hamper by the former, while the pre-Adamite maid burnt feathers and brown paper, after annexing the size and turpentine. Charlie always declared that my Dame used the clean piece of canvas to make frocks for his little girls, the paint and brushes to decorate the carts at his farm, the size on his barns, and the turpentine for his furniture. "But we'll have our theatricals all the same, Jack," he cried; "even if we're expelled for it. We'll go on the Greek principle,

and follow the line of that brute, Aristophanes—we'll do without scenery."

And we did. I, with the help of the burlesques of Planché and Burnand, knocked up an extravaganza called "The Green Man," in which Charlie, indifferently made up as Mr Magoy, sang a song with the refrain—

"I'm the Green Man, never still,
A villain with plenty of will,
I greatly enjoy
To torture a boy,
And green tea I drink till I'm ill!"

A gross libel on my Dame, for a kinder-hearted man never lived. The piece, owing to the limited size of the auditorium, ran for a week, and Mr Magoy was ever afterwards called behind his back by his boarders, "The Green Man."

It was in the Easter half that I was the victim of Larkhall's propensity for clandestine sport. During the holidays he had seen a magnificent rug made of catskins, the result of the relentless pursuit of Grimalkin by one of his cousins, a youth pursuing his studies at Christ Church, Oxford.

Charlie was seized with a craving to emulate the feats of his relative, and came back full of resolution to acquire a rug made from the pelts of the feline inhabitants of Eton. That there were plenty of them we knew only too well, judging by the nightly concerts about the houses.

"Now," said Larkhall, "I've found out from my cousin, Jimmy Joscelyn, how to work the trick. You must know that these squatters are passionately fond of a certain stuff called valerian—poison, I should think by the smell——"

"Worse than paint, size, and turpentine?" I put in.

"Shut up, Bingo" (that was my nickname), grunted Charlie (Cocky was his sobriquet). "Well," he went on, "all you've got to do is to sprinkle this stuff about, and the mousers come and tear about it, just as if it was eau-de-cologne. Now I got our butler to buy me a quart of this muck, and here it is," he added, producing a huge flat bottle labelled

From SENNER & SALTS,

Chemists to the Royal Family,

5008 PICCADILLY.

The Hair-Wash as Prescribed.

"LORD CHARLES LARKHALL."

"Not a bad idea, is it? I thought our Green Man might sniff it out and impound it. Then the next articles required are a couple of good saloon pistols. Here they are!" he continued, opening a wooden box bearing the inscription:

From PLUMB & APLETREE,

Purveyors to the Emperor of the French,

906 OLD BOND STREET, W.

Finest Gooseberry Jam.

THE MOST HONOURABLE THE MARQUIS OF EARLYBIRD.

Earlybird House, Grosvenor Square.

"You see there are some pots on the top; underneath, there are some pot-shots," and he produced a couple of very pretty weapons. "Now, when Jimmy told me about his sport," continued Larkhall, "I thought what a splendid hunting-ground that would be," and he pointed to the roofs of the outhouses on the other side of the yard. "So I came stocked with ammunition. What do you think of the idea?"

"Splendid!" I cried admiringly; "but how are you going to get the valerian on to the roofs, Cocky?"

"An excellent objection, Master Bingo," replied Larkhall; "but see here, you know what that is—a garden squirt. It's what my sister used in her conservatory, till I slipped it under my overcoat one fine morning. Now, listen. I charge this weapon with valerian, and fire at the ivy, about tea-time. When all the world is at rest, you and I, like brave Shikarries, will fire at the dear little pussies."

"I've another objection," I said; "supposing that we bring them down, how are we going to get the bodies?"

"Upon my Sibby!" cried Charlie, "you ought to have been a lawyer. I have discovered that Jinks possesses a short ladder, which he uses in cleaning the windows. Jinks is not a flunkey who despises humble bobs and tizzies. In a word, Jinks is in our pay. He will collect the game, put it in a hamper, and the first thing in the morning take it up to Bob Bluff, the bird-stuffer's. I ought to add that these pistols make scarcely any sound at all. Now, are you satisfied, and is the C. C. C., or Cat Cremation Club Limited, established?"

I replied with an eager affirmative, and we drank success to sport later on, at "Tap."

All that Larkhall expected occurred. The valerian worked marvels, and night after night, after Sarah had collected the candlesticks, the roysterers on the roofs fell to our unerring aim. Of course some of the other boys were in the secret, and one day a fellow called Glasby asked permission to join the C. C. C., and in token of qualification produced a splendid new "saloon." We could not well refuse, especially as the

quarry was getting very wary. We had succeeded in bagging Mrs Magoy's favourite tortoiseshell, but we were most desirous of acquiring a huge grey Persian tom, which belonged to Mr Gintletop, who was the tutor at the next house to ours. This particular animal had a knack of crouching in the ivy and suddenly springing clean over the wall. The window of Glasby's room, owing to the slant of the wall, was much nearer this lair than ours. Accordingly Glasby was elected to our dual Association. We only wished that he had been Gregory.

In order to slay Mr Gintletop's Teheran mouser, it was arranged by Charlie that we should direct our fusillade from Glasby's out-look. The night was very dark, and we were all attention, when a grey shadow leapt from the creeper. Glasby had his pistol down by his side.

"Fire!" whispered Larkhall, excitedly.

Glasby obeyed, but unluckily he missed Grimalkin, and hit me, while fumbling for the trigger. I felt a thrust like red-hot iron through the calf of my left leg.

"I'm shot!" I exclaimed, and fell upon the floor.

"Where?" asked Charlie, as he lighted a bull's-eye lantern.

I pointed to the place where I felt the pain.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "what's to be done?"

Glasby was speechless with horror.

"We must wake up Winks," said Larkhall, "but what are we to tell her. Stop, I have it! Shove these saloons under your shirt, Glasby, while I help Bingo to our room. Do you think you can manage it, old man?"

"Of course I can," I replied, and leaning on his arm I hobbled to our own quarters, where Cocky

made me undress and lie down on the bed. He then bound a silk handkerchief round my injured limb.

"Shall you be all right while I fetch Winks?"

"Of course I shall," I answered, as Glasby put his head in at the door.

"Go back to your room, Glasby," said Larkhall, "and don't move from it."

He then put out the bull's-eye, placed it in the bureau, and left me in utter darkness and considerable pain. Presently he re-appeared, accompanied by Miss Winks, attired in a drab velveteen dressing-gown, with a white and black checked shawl bound round her head.

"Franklyn," she said, in a tremulous voice, "Larkhall tells me that while you and he were, as members of the College Volunteer Corps, discussing some question about pistol firing at Wimbledon, his lethal weapon suddenly went off, and severely wounded you. Of course I have sent Joseph to Windsor for Doctor Embleton. Meantime, is there anything I can get for you? Mr Magey is, unfortunately, not at home, having gone to a meeting of Egyptologists in London, and will not return till to-morrow. Oh! I could cry over this horrible affair. Why are pistols made? Why does the Head-master allow the volunteers to exist?" And the worthy creature wiped her eyes with the corner of her head covering.

I assured her that I wanted nothing except a glass of water, and that I did not feel in the least bit ill.

Miss Winks gave a sickly smile, and then said: "But I must insist upon acquiring, unloaded, the pernicious pistol which has injured poor Franklyn."

"I was about to give it you, ma'am," observed

Larkhall gravely, "I could not bear to look upon it again." So saying he went to his "burry," and brought out a weapon. It was a pistol certainly, or rather had been, for now it was a barrel with a cap hammer, to which we had glued a stock. In fact it had been a "property" in our famous private theatricals. I nearly choked with laughter, and hid my face in the bed-clothes.

Miss Winks took the terrible shooter with a trembling hand. "You're sure it's not loaded?" she ejaculated.

"Perfectly certain," said Larkhall in soothing tones. "For one reason, I regret to part with it. My great-grandfather used it at the Battle of Talavera."

"Ah!" said Miss Winks, Burke bubbling to her lips. "You mean the first Marquis of Earlybird?"

"The very same warrior," replied the incorrigible Cocky, without moving a muscle.

"Well, well," mused Miss Winks aloud. "It's curious that a little *fusil*, which did such execution among the French desperadoes, should nearly have slain an English boy. If you are certain, Franklyn, that I can be of no service to you, I will retire until Doctor Embleton arrives."

As she withdrew, I stuffed the sheet into my mouth.

"There," remarked Larkhall, "wasn't that well played? If I'd told Winks the truth she'd have interv'wed that idiot Glasby, and then good-bye to our saloons and our catskins. As it is, I shall get some sort of a *pœna*, I suppose, but I'd rather be swished any day of the week."

I need not say more about this matter than that Larkhall's desire was carried out; that Glasby was

frightened into silence by Cocky's threat of shooting him if he "blabbed"; that Dr Embleton, an able physician—he called every day—ordered me to stay out of school for the rest of the Half (a prescription after my own heart); and that Jinks eventually secured Mr Gintletop's Persian grey, as well as many other tile-warblers, by means of poisoned meat. So Larkhall took home with him a rug, which fairly equalled that in the possession of his cousin, Jimmy Joscelyn, of the "House" on the Isis.

The next Summer Half was my last at Eton, and in it I was destined to achieve a celebrity which was quite unexpected. Having, before the Monkey Island incident, started as an enthusiastic "wet bob," I, after the muster in the schoolyard, began to shun the river. It may be that the affair disgusted me with any more intimate acquaintance with Father Thames, or, what is more likely, that I was deterred from boating by receiving a laconic message from Anthony Fuller, which ran as follows:—

DEAR JACK,—Avoid Monkey Island. That boatman has come back. Hoping you're well, Yours, till Gabriel's Trumpet,
TONY.

P.S.—Light your pipe with this.

Anyway I became a "dry bob," and frequented Sixpenny and Lower Club with assiduity, and persuaded Gregory and Larkhall to abandon skiffs and sculls for bats, balls, and stumps. I was a fair bat and moderate round-arm bowler, but I never shone brilliantly as a cricket star. In this same Summer Half however, one fine day, when playing single wicket with Cocky and Reggie, I tried a new form of underhand trundling, which I had been

thinking of for some weeks, and which had been suggested to me by reading "Felix on the Bat," and similar old-fashioned books. My method was very simple, and practically based on the theory of lawn bowls. As tried on Gregory and Larkhall it was completely successful, so much so, that Cocky exclaimed—

"By Jupiter! Bingo, you've hit on something as killing as arsenic. Let's go down to Upper Club this evening and give old 'Jam Tart' a dose of it."

"Jam Tart," I may explain, held the high and mighty position of Captain of the Eleven, and derived his nickname from the following circumstance. He was exceedingly fond of jam tarts, and even when a candidate for high cricketing honours, never failed to patronise his favourite delicacy. In those days the boys, not actually in the Eleven, were privileged to wear white ducks instead of the white flannels reserved exclusively for the Eight, and the representatives of Eton against Winchester and Harrow. On a certain match-day, the future Captain of the Eleven was indulging in his wonted pastry, when he was unexpectedly called upon to "go in." Cramming two of the tarts into his trousers pockets, the aspirant went to the wickets, and very shortly by his prowess succeeded in knocking up a great score. But, while he ran, the tarts melted, and presently red stains appeared on his spotless continuations. He himself did not notice the ruddy eczema, but as its tokens grew larger and larger, the captain of the other side called a halt, fearing that the tyro's exertions had caused a severe accident, possibly the breaking of a blood-vessel. Of course, on examination, the true cause

of the apparition was discovered amid general hilarity. Thenceforward, this particular wearer of white ducks was dubbed "Jam Tart," a title by which he was subsequently known throughout the length and breadth of England. Now, if there was one branch of batting in which "Jam Tart" excelled, it was in slogging, and to satisfy this propensity he would, nearly every evening, set up a stump in Upper Club, and permit any one to bowl to him, the while he sent balls flying to every part of the ground, and over the tall chestnut trees. He utterly despised the recognised ethics of written cricket, and pulled balls from leg to off, and *vice versa*, stating that such methods were distinctly valuable, because the fieldsmen never knew where to look out for him. As he had an unerring eye and immense physical force, he was conspicuous in practising what he preached, but feeble imitators of his style, without his muscular address, speedily discovered the error of their ways. It was this redoubtable "Jam Tart" whom Cocky Larkhall proposed that I should tackle. I agreed to try, but not without the same sort of feeling that David probably had when he went forth to battle with Goliath.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

I COME OFF AT LORD'S

WHEN Larkhall, Gregory, and myself, arrived at Upper Club, we found that the mighty "Jam Tart" had sprung two bats, caused the loss of half-a-dozen leathern spheres, and had dislocated the fingers of a small boy, who had attempted to stop one of his tremendous drives. I had often bowled to "Jam Tart," but had never succeeded in disturbing the equanimity of his defence. We were not on familiar terms, but he greeted me as an ogre would a fresh victim.

"Ha! ha!" he called out. "It's you, Mr Bingo Franklyn, is it? Come on!" and he placed himself in his favourite position for sending a twenty-ton gunshot among the spectators. I began with one of my new bail searchers, which he missed altogether, and which whizzed very near his solitary stump.

"Hullo!" he cried, very much astonished. "I thought you bowled round arm."

"I used to do so," I said, "but I've altered now."

"Well," he exclaimed, rubbing his hands on the grass to get better grip of the willow. "Have another try."

This time I fared better. "Jam Tart's" stump was sent flying out of the turf, to the intense delight of Gregory and Larkhall, and the supreme astonish-

ment of the lookers-on and particularly of "Jam Tart" himself.

"I'll lay you half-a-crown that you don't do it again," shouted the Captain of the Eleven.

"Done!" cried Larkhall, before I could speak. "Give him another, Bingo," he said quietly to me.

I did, and with the same result. "Jam Tart" got very red in the face, the more so as the spectators laughed loudly.

"Double or quits he doesn't do the hat trick!" he called out to Larkhall.

"Done!" answered Cocky.

This time I was not quite on the spot, and pitched my ball short. "Jam Tart" saw the error, and stepping forward, opened his shoulders with a vengeance, but as luck would have it, he did not allow for the spin, and the ball, instead of going as it ought to have done, into Fellow's Pond, went straight up like a sky-rocket, so high, indeed, that by running I managed to catch it before it reached the ground. The audience clapped their hands, Larkhall and Gregory very lustily.

"I've had enough of this," said "Jam Tart," breathing hard. "My eye must be out in this bad light. I'm going home. Here's your 'bull,' Cocky," he added, tossing two half-crowns to Larkhall, as he put on his coat and trudged away with another of the Eleven towards College.

"That was well done, Bingo," said Larkhall joyfully, as we followed in his track. "Now, I'm not a bit surprised at the way you treated Reggie and myself. Let's go to 'Tap' and celebrate our victory."

Although I was very proud and delighted at lowering "Jam Tart's" stumps at the time, I thought

no more of the incident, when, a week later, I was reminded of it after the Winchester Match, in which we had been thoroughly thrashed by ten wickets. One morning, to my great surprise, I found a note from "Jam Tart," asking me to play for the School against the Zingari, the only match before the great contest at Lords. I felt as happy as a Jew who has picked up a bad shilling and paid a cabman with it. Against the Zingari, though very nervous, I did fairly well, taking five wickets and making twelve runs "not out," going in last. "Jam Tart," who was a really good fellow, without an ounce of uncharitableness in his disposition, congratulated me on my performance, "but," he added, "you didn't bowl so well as you did the evening when Cocky backed you."

He left the field in earnest conversation with the two Masters, whose dicta in cricketing matters were as important as the decision of the Prime Minister in things political.

I hoped to be chosen for the Eleven, but I did not think I should have such good fortune. On the Wednesday before the Harrow Match "Jam Tart" sent for me. "Look here, Bingo Franklyn," he said: "you'll have to go up to Lords as Twelfth Man. I think you ought to be in the team, but Juxon" (one of the aforesaid masters), "prefers Norris."

I was both pleased and disappointed. I was please^d because I had come to the fore; I was disappointed because I had just missed the mark. Cocky Larkhall and Reggie Gregory were both indignant when I told them of "Jam Tart's" decision.

"Norris, indeed!" said Gregory; "why, at Winchester they clobbered him all over the shop."

"Norris!" cried Cocky the Valiant; "I'd play him single wicket for a sovereign, any day of the week, and go on doing it all the year round, thereby assured of an income equal to that of a major in the Army."

I ordered my Eton blue cap and scarf, my flannels and my jacket at Sanders's, but I felt sure that I should never display them at St John's Wood. Probably after the Harrow match I might show them against Maidenhead or the Old Etonians, or go touring with the Lazzaroni, but at Lords I was now certain that I should not sport the light blue. I was wrong. Late on Thursday night—the match was on Friday and Saturday—I got a laconic note from "Jam Tart":

"Norris's father has died suddenly; you'll have to play to-morrow."

If I experienced no sorrow for Norris's bereavement it was only human nature. I got but little sleep that night, and when we started in the brake for Slough the next morning, I felt like a deserter going to execution. Indeed I must have looked very miserable, for "Jam Tart," in his inimitable and cheery way, observed: "I say, Bingo, if you don't try to get out of the dumps, I'll be hanged if I don't send you to the nearest hospital." And he set to work like a brave chief, as he was, to make me laugh.

One yarn he told us amused me uncommonly. He said: "The first year I played against Harrow, the wicket-keeper was a fellow who had left Eton for certain reasons. Directly I got in, I found that he was taking balls before the wicket, so I turned round and said, 'Look here, Blasgrove, you may or may not

have left the old school under a cloud, but by Henry VI. if you get in front of the bails again, you'll leave this ground with such a crack from my bat on your skull, as you'll remember till you're under quite another sort of turf.' He didn't repeat the performance."

As usual, we lost the toss, though "Jam Tart" had all his lucky coppers in the left-hand pocket of his trousers. Lords then was not quite so crowded as it is now, but when we went into the field a kind of awe crept over me, as I looked at that great arena of faces and finery. My place was "Third Man." "Jam Tart" put on Wigginton and Blunt, two fast bowlers, to open the ball, but the "hill-toppers" had made half a century before the first wicket fell, one of the Harrovians being run out. A change of bowling was then made, "lobs" being tried at the Pavilion end, but the score still mounted, and the hundred went up, amid a storm of cheers from the Dark Blues, before another separation was effected, by a splendid catch by "Jam Tart" at cover point. Then it was that he told me to go on, next over, at the Nursery end. The score was two wickets for 110. The first ball I bowled lacked side, was off the stumps, and was smacked to the ropes for four, but with my next I had my revenge. I lifted the middle stick clean out of the ground, and repeated the performance when the newcomer had taken his guard. After that I knew I had got what I called "my bias," and I levelled the wickets six times more, before the innings closed for 183.

When we went back to the Pavilion, hands were stretched out to me, hands patted me on the back, hands were beaten frantically together, while shouts

and counter shouts rolled round the ground. But above all I heard a voice from one of the enclosures holloa—"Well done, young feller!" And I knew that the voice was that of Anthony Fuller. I looked in the direction whence it proceeded, and recognised that worthy seated on a drag in company with a brass-headed-nail dame, in whom I recognised Mrs Bottletrap; while behind her, waving her handkerchief, was a damsel arrayed in light blue, whom I knew to be Tabby. As I went into lunch I did not feel altogether comfortable, and I wished that Lady Beatrice, whose Coral Hand was even now with me, had been where Tabby signalled her welcome.

Before we commenced our innings I was greeted by Tony, over the railings, in front of the Pavilion. He was dressed in particularly smart style, and displayed, I noticed, a diamond pin in his scarf, and a bunch of forget-me-nots in his button-hole.

"Bravo, young feller!" he observed, with his cheery smile. "Bravo! I've got a message for you from Mrs B. She doesn't know whether you have made any arrangements, but, if not, will you dine and sleep at the hotel to-night? I've something important to tell you myself. I'm staying there. Don't bother your head about it now. I'll meet you here when the stumps are drawn, and get your answer. Good luck!" and he hurried away as the bell began ringing for the clearance of the ground.

We made 240. I contributed the zero, being beaten by as fine a bailer as ever left a bowler's fist. "Jam Tart" was the mainstay of our side. He performed prodigies of valour, hacking and slashing like a Paladin of old, hitting two balls over the Pavilion, and nearly smashing the face of the clock on the racquet

court. His score was 89. He was ably backed up by Lord Stour-and-Avon, who made 51; Billy Trumpington with 47, and "Reels" Cotton with 21.

I had been invited to stay at Earlybird House, and so was determining that I could not accept Mrs Bottlestrap's invitation, when a telegram was delivered to me. It was from Charlie Larkhall, and ran as follows :

"Governor taken with a stroke—Can you get a bed elsewhere?—Reggie can put you up—Reply paid.—COCKY."

This changed my resolution. I immediately answered :

"Very sorry to hear of Lord Earlybird's illness—Cheer up—Many thanks—Have got room at friend's house."

Had I been gifted with second sight I ought to have walked the streets all night, rather than have sent that despatch. On such incidents does the axis of our mortal wheel turn. Had Norris's father not died, I should not have been playing at Lords. Had Lord Earlybird not been stricken, I should not have gone to Mrs Bottlestrap's hotel. Fate! Fate! Fate!

I found Tony, as he had promised, waiting by the palings, and told him that I should be glad to accompany him to the Bottlestrap hostelry.

"Good business," he said. "Where's your gripsack—your bag, I mean?"

"In the Pavilion," I replied. "I'll fetch it. Please get a hansom."

"Right!" he sung out, as he hurried off. "I'll wait at the main entrance gate till you've changed your togs. Be as quick as you can. Mrs B. and Tabby will go on ahead and get your room ready."

I dressed as quickly as possible, and getting a waiter to carry my gladstone, soon discovered Tony at the appointed spot. He was having an altercation with a policeman, who declared that the cabman, whom he had engaged, was impeding the traffic.

"Very good," observed Tony; "you have taken my cabman's number; now I'll take yours, and charge you."

"What for?" asked the man in blue, sulkily.

"That, young feller," replied Tony, hopping into the hansom, "is a stable secret, which I can only communicate to the Chief, but I think it only fair to ask you if I am correct in believing that you are acquainted with the Tiptoff Club in Soho"

The constable became livid, and began subserviently, "I'm sure, sir, I didn't know——"

"All right," interrupted Anthony Fuller, "drive on, cabby!"

"What's the Tiptoff Club?" I asked, as we rattled away.

"No place for good little boys, but if you win the match I'll take you there to-morrow night. But mum's the word before Mrs B."

"What's the important news you have to tell me?" I asked.

"Just this, that your great-aunt, Miss MacWashington that was, has quarrelled with her beautiful husband, and is trying to get a divorce from him, but we haven't got enough evidence yet."

"*We!*" I echoed with amazement; "what on earth, Tony, have you to do with the matter?"

"Ah," he said, with one of his queer twinkles, "that's what the monkey in the menagerie asked,

when he found his neighbour, the wolf, chewing his tail. But here we are at Mother B's."

Mrs Bottletrap, apparently not a day older, but rather more brilliant than when I encountered her on Monkey Island, greeted me most effusively, but, thank goodness, did not attempt to embrace me.

"Why, lor' bless me, Mr John, 'ow you do grow to be sure. Why it's four years since me and Tabby met you on the Thames, and as you've shot up, so 'as she. Tabby's quite the young lady now, not Tabby at all, but Miss Evelyn Cavendish of my old shop, the Spree Theatre. Well, well," added Mrs Bottletrap with a sigh; "I 'ope she'll be as 'appy as I was. She's quite old enough to earn her own livin'. But 'ere she is."

I was thunderstruck at the change in Tabby's appearance since I saw her on Monkey Island. Then she was a pretty hoyden, now she was a fully developed young woman, above the ordinary height, beautifully attired in an evening gown cut very low, both before and behind, so as to give a liberal display of her well-shaped neck and shoulders. She wore some very shining rings on her little hands, and some costly bracelets on her rounded arms. Her dark eyes gleamed with pleasure, and her full red lips smiled "Welcome," as she entered the door with the gait of a princess. For the moment I was struck dumb at this beauteous apparition.

"Lo' bless me, Tabby," surveying her niece's attire; "ain't you goin' to the theatre to-night?"

"Very likely, aunty, but not to the Spree. I've sent a wire to old Dibbler, the stage manager, to say I'm seedy. No, Jack—I mean Mr Franklyn—shall take me out after dinner. Which is it to be?"

she asked, with a bewitching look—"‘Jack,’ or ‘Mr Franklyn’?"

"Jack, of course," I exclaimed, with I know not what kind of fire running through my veins. "And what shall I call you?"

"Tabby to you," she answered softly, "but to no one else."

"Now, Mr John, you'd best go and wash your 'ands, as dinner 'll be ready in a few minutes. Don't trouble to dress because this vain-'earted girl 'as got on 'er finery——"

"Not dress?" I cried; "of course I shall!" I would not have shirked my swallow-tails for fifty dinners.

I had forgotten all about Anthony Fuller, but just as I was beginning to make my toilet there came a knock at my door, and my versatile friend sauntered in.

"Ah!" he said, "Mrs B.'s given you her best room, and I see that Tabby's decorated it very nicely with flowers and photographs of her seraphic self. Stunning creature, ain't she? Look at that," and he handed me a cabinet likeness of Miss Evelyn Cavendish, as "Mercury," in "Venus and Adonis," at the Spree Theatre.

It was Tabby in a most voluptuous position, with very little on, except what appeared to be an embroidered jersey and a pair of bathing-drawers.

"It's very beautiful!" I said with rapture; "very beautiful!"

"Yes, Tabby's a fine girl. You've got plenty of her here. She's taken care of that." He pointed to the chimney-piece and dressing-table. Then I noticed that Tabby's photographs were scattered everywhere,

while bouquets of flowers made fragrance around them. The truth flashed across me.

"Why, she's given me her room," I cried.

"That's about it," said Tony coolly. "Oh, she's artful is Miss Tabby."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked fiercely.

"Order, order in the gallery!" said Tony. "Come, young feller, keep your hair on. Only keep your weather eye open, that's all! I know Tabby, and Tabby knows me."

"And I know her, too," I rejoined hotly.

Anthony Fuller gave a smile which verged on a grin. "*You* know her, my poor lost lambkin," he said. "No, and you never will know her till she's picked your bones and left your corpse by the wayside." With this he went out of the room, leaving me scarlet with indignation. However, the dinner-bell rang, and I hurried downstairs to Mrs Bottlestrap's parlour, where I found Tabby waiting for me.

"Auntie's had the table laid for us in Number Three," she said. "She hopes you'll excuse her, as the sun at Lords has made her head ache, and she's gone to lie down."

"Is Anthony Fuller going to join us?" I asked.

Tabby shrugged her plump shoulders. "Oh, Jack!" she whispered, "don't you know that two's company and three's none?"

We had a capital dinner, washed down with champagne, and winding up with coffee, liqueurs, and cigarettes. Tabby kept up a ceaseless prattle about London life, and told me endless anecdotes about the stage and the people on it. I could not understand half of what she said, but I noticed

that she seemed to know a good many noblemen and other swells, and called most of them by their Christian or nicknames. I liked to hear her talk in this utterly new way, giving me peeps into a world of which I was wholly ignorant.

"Do you like being at the theatre?" I asked.

"Oh, I love it!" she cried enthusiastically.

"Do they pay you well?" I went on.

"Of course they do, you silly, or how could I afford to buy these pretty things?" and she laughed as she pointed to her bracelets. "Besides," she added, "you see I live with aunt, and have no lodgings to find, like most poor girls on the stage. Have some Chartreuse, and then I'm going to take you to the Alhambra, where the manager, times being slack, has given me a box," and she held up a ticket. It did not strike me at the time that it was curious that the manager of the Alhambra should issue "orders" by way of Mitchell's Library in Bond Street.

I shall never forget that evening. It was one long scene of intoxicating delight. I wonder what the Head-master, or my Dame, or my tutor, or even "Jam Tart" himself would have said, could they have looked into the Leicester Square Theatre, and beheld John Franklyn seated *tête-à-tête* in a private box, with a lovely and resplendent actress, drinking soda and brandy, and smoking cigars. I have not the faintest recollection of what constituted the performance. It seemed to be all glittering gold, and sensuous music revolving round the central figure, Tabby. Once the box door opened, and a grey-haired man, with a waxed moustache and an eye-glass, looked in.

"Hallo, Vashti!" he began.

"Go away, One Eye," interrupted Tabby, "I'm talking business."

"Beg pardon," he said. "See you later?"

"Not to-night, One Eye. Again, I say, go away."

One Eye mumbled something, and slamming the door, disappeared.

"Who's that, and why did he call you Vashti?" I asked, with jealousy rising in my bosom at the intruder's familiarity.

"Oh," she answered, "it's only his way. He writes plays for the Spree, and tries to be funny off, as well as on, the stage. How do you like the show?"

"I think!" I said, pressing her hand in mine, "that it's simply heavenly, and you are an angel."

"Naughty boy!" she cried, gently tapping me with her fan, but she didn't withdraw her right hand. We drove home in a four-wheeler. Tabby said she was afraid of hansom's at night. Scarcely had we started from the theatre when she leaned her head on my shoulder, and whispered, "Jack, dear Jack, do you love me as you used to do? If so, kiss me as I want to be kissed." I cannot describe the sensation which came over me, as the fragrance of her body seemed to make me feel faint. Then I caught her in my arms, pressed her lips to mine, and kissed her again and again, the while she sighed like one who is sated with enjoyment. It was a dream all the way from the Alhambra to the hotel. I heard nothing and saw nothing, till the cab drew up with a jerk in front of the house. Tabby opened the door with a latch-key.

"Auntie's gone to bed," she said, looking into the parlour, "but there's supper laid in Number Three,

so we will just have a mouthful. Only, remember, dear Jack, you must be a very good boy."

We passed into Number Three.

"Hallo, Bingo," said "Jam Tart," the next morning, when I appeared in the Pavilion, "you look rather chippy this morning. Been drinking fizz, I suppose. Now, I'm going to put you on to bowl first, and if you're in yesterday's form, the sticks ought to be flying about like leaves."

But, alas! I was not in yesterday's form. My hand had lost its cunning, and my bowling was knocked all over the field, and runs came at express pace. I did not take a single wicket, though I was tried several times. I felt that I was a failure. We had plenty of leather-hunting, without reckoning the boundary hits, before our opponents were disposed of, leaving us 203 runs to win the match. I felt very despondent at the course things had taken, and I swore inwardly at the unhappy fate which had made me the guest of Mrs Bottlestrap. As I was to go in last, I had plenty of time at my disposal. At least I hoped so. I therefore strolled round the ground in order to try and find Gregory. I knew pretty well where he was likely to be, for he had told me that his father's coach was to be found in Block A. Of course my cap and flannels proclaimed that I was one of the Eton Eleven, but I was not over pleased to be personally recognised by one old gentleman, who observed as I passed, "Ah! there goes Franklyn, the underhand bowler. He's what I call an expensive luxury." I ground my teeth with rage. The old brute had already forgotten my services of the previous day. I felt ingratitude when I was young; I expect it

now that I am middle-aged. I found Sir Rupert Gregory's coach without much difficulty, and was warmly welcomed by Reggie, who introduced me to his bluff old father, in a white beaver hat, to his kindly mother, and to his two pretty sisters.

"Glad to meet you, Mr Franklyn," said Sir Rupert heartily. "Reggie, give Mr Franklyn all he wants, but remember, my boy," he added with a laugh, "we *must* win this match, and you've got to go in."

I got on to the coach and watched the play. Things began badly; we had three wickets down for 36, but then, amid a hurricane of cheers, the mighty "Jam Tart" strode from the Pavilion. As usual, he wiped his hands on the grass, and took a look all round, noting, of course, that as a tribute to his prowess, all the long-fieldsmen were close up to the ropes. He soon got to work, and being associated with Stour-and-Avon, a very steady bat, the score began to mount rapidly, but just after the century was reached, his partner cut too late at a ball, and was held in the slips. As the next man, Billy Trumpington, was walking to the wicket, I heard a girl's voice exclaim: "Oh! I shall cry — indeed I shall cry — if we are beaten."

I looked, and on the next drag beheld a golden-haired fairy of fifteen, in white muslin, with a sash of Eton blue, but she had no reason to wear it, for her eyes were living turquoises.

"Who is that young lady?" I asked Miss Emily Gregory.

"That's Lady Beatrice Belleisle, daughter of the Duke of Middlesex. I suppose you've never seen her before."

"Only—once," I stammered ; "I didn't—recognise her." And instinctively I grasped the Coral Hand.

"O dear ! O dear ! there's another one out !" I heard Lady Beatrice cry angrily. I felt it was time for me to return to the Pavilion. As I got down from the drag I again heard Lady Beatrice's voice saying : "There's Mr Franklyn—I heard Sir Rupert Gregory speak to him. Oh ! how I pray he'll make runs."

I inwardly swore I would try to make good her vow.

The valiant "Jam Tart" had done marvels, but he was caught by long leg after he had run up 79, when I, the last hope of Eton, walked to the wicket, amid breathless silence. We wanted 22 runs to win, and 21 to tie. Curiously enough I did not feel the least bit nervous ; something had strengthened me. "Granny" Ford, our wicket keeper, was my associate, a stolid bat, who never hit anything on the wicket. To this day, I don't know what it was, unless it was Lady Beatrice's prayer, that made me play as I did. For the nonce I became a miniature "Jam Tart," and sent the bowling here, there, and everywhere. Three changes were tried without success. At last, after I had driven the ball to long off for two, there arose a great and mighty shout. I knew what it meant, that the scores were equal. The Harrow bowler knew this too. He girded up his loins. I confess I did not see the ball he delivered, but I lashed forward. There was a great roar ! We had won the Match ! I stood stupefied for a moment, and then fell fainting to the ground.

CHAPTER NINTH

ON THE THRESHOLD

WHEN I came to myself I was in a dressing-room of the Pavilion, surrounded by sympathetic faces. As I subsequently learnt, I had been carried from the wicket, where I had fallen amid a scene of intense excitement; and all sorts of rumours were floating about as to my collapse, and the cause of it. Of course, a great many wiseacres freely asserted that I had fallen down dead, and it was in consequence of this report that an immense number of persons refused to leave the ground, but gathered together in front of the Pavilion, calling out—"Franklyn! Franklyn!"

"How do you feel?" asked the handsome bearded secretary of the M.C.C., one of the kindest men, who ever wielded the willow.

"Oh, I'm all right," I exclaimed, in a kind of befogged way. "We've won, haven't we?"

"Of course you've won," replied the secretary; "and you made the winning hit. Now," he added, "just gulp this down. It's a small brandy-and-soda."

I did so, and no medicine, which I have ever taken since, has proved so efficacious. I felt myself again in a trice, and jumped on to my feet.

"I feel," I cried, "that I should like to go in again."

Then, there were laughter and cheers, and congratulations poured upon me as heavily as do telegrams of condolence when a Potentate passes the Styx.

"Jam Tart" was in great form. "Bingo," he exclaimed, as he wrung my hand; "you shall be first choice into the Eleven. I knew we should pull it off, though—it was a dead certainty."

Whereat the bystanders laughed consumedly, for "Jam Tart" was well-known as a prophet of evil.

"I think," put in the M.C.C. secretary, "if Mr Franklyn doesn't object, that he ought to show himself to the populace. Otherwise they won't believe that he's alive, and we shan't get the ground cleared before midnight."

"Right!" cried "Jam Tart," catching me by the arm. "Come along, Bingo!" and almost before I was aware of it, I was facing the great mob of excited beings. Cheer after cheer, mingled with all sorts of shouts, went up, while hats flew into the air, and sticks and umbrellas, upon which many of the Eton boys had tied their light-blue neckties, were waved wildly to and fro. I stood before them bareheaded for a moment. Then some one opened the gate of the Pavilion, and in less time than it takes to record the fact, I was being carried round the ground in most uncomfortable fashion. It is the custom of the English to maltreat with kindness the hero of the hour. However, "Jam Tart" and one or two others came to my rescue, when some enthusiasts proposed a second tour. When I was once more in a haven of refuge, and about to change my clothes, one of the attendants came in with a card. "There's a young doctor outside, sir, friend of Mr Franklyn,

wants to see him," and he handed the pasteboard to the Club secretary, who still hovered around.

"Certainly, certainly," said the secretary; "show him in! show him in! You know him, of course, Mr Franklyn—Dr Anthony Fuller?" he added, referring to the card.

The impudence of Tony nearly made me burst out laughing, but curbing my risibility I replied: "Of course I do. He's a very old friend."

Thereupon entered the new Galen, beaming as usual. He bowed politely to the secretary, who, having returned his salutation, said: "Well, I'll leave you now, Mr Franklyn. Dr Fuller will, of course, see you safely home. Good-night." We shook hands all round. As the secretary left the room I heard him mutter to himself: "Looks d——d young for a doctor."

"Well, young feller," said Anthony, "you've done very well. I congratulate you; the more so as I took 10 to 1 in fivers against Eton three times over when you went in. But what the dickens came over you, just after you'd crumped that last ball to the ropes?"

"I don't know, Tony," I said; "it must have been the sun."

"I think it must have been the moon," he returned dryly. "There was a fine moon—almost a honeymoon—last night."

"I wish you'd shut up your confounded chaff," I said, reddening. "What do you mean?"

"Just to know what you intend to do," he answered inconsequently. "There's your friend, Gregory, outside waiting for you. He wants you to go to his father's house. Shall you accept his invitation, or will you come back with me to Mrs B.'s, and accom-

THE SCARLET CITY

pany me to the Tiptoff Club, after we've done the rounds?"

Anthony Fuller had baited his hook very adroitly. I did not hesitate an instant, but answered eagerly: "I'll go with you, Tony, but I shouldn't like Reggie to feel hurt."

"That's all right," he said. "I can't ask him to come to the Club, but we'll make an appointment with him to meet at Evans's and have supper."

And, so when we encountered dear old Reggie, it was arranged. Reggie was not a bit chagrined. "I think you're quite right, Bingo," he observed. "If you came to our place the Mater would make you go to bed with cold compresses round your head, and a hot bottle at your feet. She said as much. You're all right now, aren't you?"

"I'm as right as ninepence," I replied; "and I don't want any cold compresses or hot-water bottles. My *doctor*" (I emphasized the word, but Tony did not wince) "has recommended quite different treatment; hasn't he, Anthony?"

"Quite different," observed that worthy, without turning a hair. "Well, we'll meet at Evans's third table, O. P. side, say a quarter past eleven. Chin-chin!" And we bowled away to Bloomsbury, while Reggie started to Belgrave Square.

"We won't dine at the hotel, Jack," said Tony; "I'll take you to the Café Regent."

"But what will Mrs Bottlestrap—what will Mrs Bottlestrap—what will Tabby say? What will——" I hesitated.

"Mrs B. will say nothing. As to Tabby, you needn't trouble about her. She's gone to spend the afternoon with her poor old uncle. No doubt, about

this time, they're finishing their tea and shrimps just before Tabby makes tracks for the Spree. Tabby's very fond of taking tea and shrimps with her uncle."

"Hasn't she been at Lords to-day?" I asked wrathfully, feeling nettled at Anthony Fuller's flippancy.

"Not she," he answered, "if she had been, they'd have heard her shriek at Notting Hill, when you tumbled down, Master Jack."

I felt consoled by this tribute to Tabby's affection for me.

"And what is her uncle?" I continued curiously, for I had never heard of this relative before.

"Her uncle," replied Anthony, with one of his peculiar eye twinkles, "is what is vulgarly called a 'Sniffer,' or, in more polite language, is a snuff merchant."

"Does he do a good business?" I asked.

"I should certainly say yes, young feller," answered Tony; "he has been dealing in rappee, Lundy Foote, and other varieties of the fragrant compound ever since he was your age, and now he is on the seventy side of sixty. A dear old gentleman, just as Tabby is a dear young lady." And he whistled softly "The Fine Old English gentleman," with variations.

We only stopped at the hotel to drop my cricketing bag, and then drove on to the Café Regent, or, as Anthony persisted in calling it, "The Cafe," without any accent on the "e." Anthony led the way upstairs and we took our seats at a little table in, what then seemed to me, the most magnificent apartment I had ever seen. A great gilt gaselier hung from the gorgeous ceiling, decorated in strict defiance of all canons of art; bouquets of sham flowers blossomed on all the little tables; the walls glistened with gold;

and the ladies, feasting with their cavaliers, were resplendent in sparkling jewellery and multi-coloured raiment. I had never looked upon such a brilliant scene before. Loud and shrill laughter rose with the pops of champagne corks, above the loud hum of general conversation and the rattle of plates, knives and forks.

"A jolly place," said Anthony complacently, as he summoned the waiter, a young Teuton, with a fair curled head and mutton chop whiskers to match. Evidently Tony was an old acquaintance of this worthy.

"Ah! Mr Fuller," he said, holding out the bill of fare, "what can I do for you?"

Anthony Fuller surveyed the carte with the air of a *gourmet*, and after debating many culinary points with the German, finally decided upon a *menu* which he described as "prime cag-mag." While we were consuming the repast, he begged me to pay particular attention to our attendant. "Oscar," he said, "is a most remarkable man among knights of the napkin. He it was, I believe, who invented the system of adding up the date with the items of the bill. The first time I came here, I found, when looking at my silver before dinner, that I had taken a bad florin, and cursed my luck aloud. Oscar overheard me, and in his polite way offered to give me a shilling for the coin. I closed with him at once. When, however, I was settling the account, I perceived my spurious friend among the change. I said nothing, but on leaving I tipped Oscar with it. He made no remonstrance, but ever since he has treated me with marked respect. Oscar is great at these dodges. He often plays the bill trick on the unsuspecting."

"What's the bill trick?" I asked.

"Oh! it's simple enough," replied Anthony, "and very efficacious. Look here, suppose this," here he put the bill of fare on a plate, "to be your little account. Your change ought to be eleven-and-three-pence, and apparently the money is lying on the paper. Count it."

I did so, and found it to be eight-and-ninepence.

"Really?" said Anthony, slipping the paper off the plate. "Count it again."

I did so, and the sum was right. I could not understand it, and said so.

"It's simple enough," observed Anthony, "I put this half-crown *under* the bill. Nine men out of ten especially when with women, neither take the bill nor count their change. But if any one does, the paper is withdrawn from the plate, as I did it just now, and the change is found to be correct by the unsuspecting customer. Oscar is great, too, on piling up phantom breads and imaginary butters. But the most impudent thing I ever saw him do, was, when I was sitting at this very table. A country bumpkin, evidently very flush, came in and said to Oscar: 'Look here, waiter, I want a very good dinner, and I leave it to you.' 'Thank you, my lord,' said Oscar, bowing very low, 'I'll do my best.' And he did: that yokel was stuffed as full as a Christmas turkey before Oscar had done with him. He drew rather a long face, when he saw the amount of the addition presented to him, and went through the items without much satisfaction, for Oscar writes a deuced bad hand. However, suddenly he lighted up. 'I say, waiter,' he cried, 'here's champagne, fifteen shillings. I've had no champagne.' 'Dear me,'

observed Oscar, calmly surveying the document. 'Ten thousand pardons for the error,' and drawing his pencil through 'champagne,' he handed the bill back *without altering the total*. The ass of a countryman paid the reckoning, and went away quite satisfied."

"But don't they find out these things at the desk yonder?" I asked.

"No," replied Anthony. "The waiters pay for everything, which they have, with bone counters, priced at so much, from sixpence to five shillings apiece. These they buy every morning. So that when you're paying your bill, it isn't a matter between you and the proprietor, but between you and the waiter. The proprietor runs no risk whatever. Sometimes the waiter gets done. Master Oscar was had very nicely one evening. A devil of a swell, all pomatum, diamond studs, eyeglass, and shirt-front, swaggered in here, and ordered a dinner fit for the Emperor of the French. Oscar thought he had got a soft thing, and was making his little "stump-up," when the noble stranger spilt his third glass of Maraschino over his left hand. 'Waiter,' he shouted, 'where's the lavatory? I must get this beastly sticky stuff off.' 'Downstairs, sir,' answered the obsequious Oscar, 'first door to the left.' Cursing and swearing at the accident, the diamond-studded man rolled down the staircase. Half an hour afterwards Oscar was cursing and swearing as well, for the eccentric nobleman never reappeared. He had taken the precaution to hang up his overcoat in the vestibule.—Bill, Oscar! be easy with the breads. I say, Oscar, if I were truly hungry, would you serve me with a chop or steak, instead of these kickshaws?"

"Well, Mr Fuller," answered Oscar, frankly, "we would stretch a great many points to oblige an old customer."

Anthony Fuller laughed, and went on, "Is it true, Oscar," he asked, "that you were once a millionaire?"

"Scarcely that, sir," returned the waiter with a deprecating gesture, "but I have run, alas! through three fortunes. Wine, women, and weeds have been my ruin."

"Weeds?" ejaculated Tony in a surprised tone.

"Yes, sir," replied the impudent Oscar; "I refer to racehorses, of which I understand you know something."

"A little! a little!" said my companion, who was evidently put out. "Come, young feller, we'll be off."

Oscar bade us "good night" with the air of a Colonial Secretary dismissing a deputation of land-grabbers in foreign parts.

On our way out, we had to pass a door, half glass half mahogany, opening on another dining-room. Quite involuntarily I looked through the portal, and immediately came to a full stop.

"Tony," I whispered, "look there!"

We both looked. What we saw, was a couple, very much pleased with one another. The gentleman was large, beaming, and red; the lady was little, beaming, and pink, her cheeks being exquisitely matched by her well-fitting gown, of the same hue.

"Don't you know them?" I went on eagerly. "That's that beast Flaherty, or MacWashington, or whatever he calls himself."

"Flaherty, MacWashington?" cried Anthony. "By Gemini! this is interesting. And who is the lady? Do you know her too, young feller?"

"Yes, I do," I answered resolutely. "She's Mrs Sharraton of Torquay."

Anthony whipped out a note-book. "Mrs Sharraton of Torquay," he muttered, as he wrote a few lines with a pencil. "Come down into the café, Jack."

I had never seen our hostess of Torquay looking so radiant, or so pretty. The little widow with whom we had spent our holidays, appeared not to be a day older than when the Wicked Uncle had fetched us from her domicile, but her outward signs of woe, judging by the pink robe, were now no more. As to Flaherty, it took some considerable stretch of imagination to make me understand that the brute was my great-uncle by marriage.

When we reached the café Anthony took up a position from which we could command the staircase, and after ordering two cups of black coffee, and two liqueurs of *fine champagne*, he proceeded to examine me as to my knowledge of Mrs Sharraton. Tony, I have always noticed, is Bismarckian in his method of eliciting answers. He never beats about the bush, but goes straight to the point. "Now, young feller," he said abruptly, "tell me all you know about Mrs Sharraton."

I did. It was not much, but Anthony brought his note-book into play, and filled in at least two pages. The reader may note that sometimes I refer to him as Anthony Fuller, sometimes as Anthony, sometimes as Tony—never as Fuller. I can't explain why I do so, but so he is, and ever will be, in my mind's eye. Anthony Fuller, when he loomed forth through the mists of his surroundings, as an Important Personage; Anthony when he is the

ordinary Middle Division Friend; and Tony, when his Personality becomes that of the man for whom I shall never have anything but loyal affection, till the Dust-Cart passes my way for collection. It is in this way, I make bold to say, that we find out the true value of friendship. Anthony Fuller, Anthony and Tony, three phrases of nomenclature, each illustrative of the passing mood, but all soldered as strongly together, as it is possible between man and man. And the love of man to man, is more honest and enduring than that of man to woman, because it is less exacting and more unselfish, more self-sacrificing, and less jealous.

We kept watch on the staircase for over an hour, at least Anthony did. I ran through every journal which I could lay hands upon, from the *Illustrated London News*, to *Le Petit Journal*. My companion puffed at a big cigar, and never let his glance deviate from the staircase. All of a sudden he nudged my arm. "Here they come," he whispered hoarsely, pointing to the toe of a pink silk shoe, which appeared on the first visible step of the marble staircase. Anthony was quite right. In a second Flaherty and Mrs Sharraton were making for the portal. "After them!" cried Anthony excitedly. We followed the departing couple. They got into a hansom, so did we.

"Follow that cab, jarvey," said Tony to our driver. Right," replied our Jehu. What this game of follow-my-leader meant, I knew not. When I ventured to ask Anthony Fuller of its purport he curtly told me to mind my own business. Inwardly indignant, I became dumb as a pointer. The chase did not last long. At a small private hotel, in a

street on the south side of Oxford Street, close by the Marble Arch, the leading cab drew up. Anthony immediately checked our vehicle, and jumped out some yards from the entrance to the house. "Don't be in a hurry," he said to me, "let the fox get well earthed." Somewhat sulkily I retorted that I had not the slightest inclination to be in a hurry, and that fox-hunting was not in my line.

"Now, young feller," said Anthony, "I didn't say it was, but to-night you're out with the Master of the Pack, and I'll take it kindly if you'll run mute."

He re-lit his cigar, and after a pause, during which neither of us spoke, he strolled towards the hotel, beckoning me to follow him. At that moment I execrated Anthony Fuller. I longed to be back at my Dame's at Eton. Anthony went into the hall of the hotel—an apology for a hall, a none too wide passage lighted by a dull gas jet. There was a closed window on the left inscribed "Office." Anthony rapped upon the panes, the window went up, and a yellow tousled-haired damsel of uncertain age put her be-powdered face through the orifice.

"I beg pardon," said Anthony, "but is my friend Mr MacWashington staying here?"

"I don't know the name," replied Miss Tousle Hair. "It's not on the books," she added, referring to a long ledger.

"Then," said Anthony, "I must have been mistaken, but driving by in a cab I made sure I saw him alight here, with his wife, just now. He and I were at Harrow together, and I wanted to shake him by the hand. A tall Irishman, I mean, with auburn locks, and his better-half a pretty little woman, a brunette, generally dresses in pink."

"Now, really," said Miss Tousle Hair, "you might be describing Mr and Mrs Fortinbras, who came in just before you."

"Don't know any one of that *name*," observed Anthony. "I suppose you're not wrong in your definition?"

"Of course I'm not," retorted the young lady tartly; "Mr and Mrs Fortinbras have been staying here, off and on, for the last two months."

"Sorry to have troubled you," said Anthony, sweetly, and politely raising his hat he added, "A lovely face like yours, should always have a flower under it." Whereupon he removed a gardenia from his button-hole, and offered it to Miss Tousle Hair. "A trifle faded, but none the less a tribute," he observed gallantly, with a killing smile.

"You're too kind," simpered the lady, as she pinned the flower on her expansive bosom.

"Not at all," said Anthony, "next time I pass this way I'll be kinder. Good-night."

"Good - night," echoed Miss Tousle Hair, in mellifluous tones; "and thank you so much."

"And thank *you* so much," he murmured, as we passed into the street. "I say, young feller, do you know what your sharp eyes have done?"

"What do you mean by sharp eyes?" I retorted snappishly, for I did not half like this cheying and coquetting, when I would much rather have been at a play-house or a music-hall.

"Only this," replied Anthony, "that you've probably done as good a stroke of business for yourself, young feller, as you possibly could."

"How so?" I queried.

"Leave that to yours truly," he answered. "Oxford,"

he called out to the cabby as we re-entered the hansom.

The Oxford was not the Alhambra ; but, truth to tell, I did not feel bored by the performance, although I could not, from time to time, help thinking of the previous-night, when Tabby and I had so enjoyed ourselves in the golden haze of Leicester Square. These were the days when the Lion Comique male artists, arrayed in impossible costumes—silk-velvet frock-coats, rainbow neckties, and yellow kid gloves flashed marvellous handkerchiefs about during the progress of their ditties ; while young ladies in gay garments, which would nowadays be looked upon as dowdy, quavered ballads about the daughters of fishermen and the Pride of Pimlico. I daresay that the refined music-hall patron of to-day would shudder at a song, of which the opening lines ran as follows :

“ I was bred up at Eton and Harrow,
At Oxford and Cambridge was taught,
My father was Knight of the Garter,
My mother presented at Court.”

A vulgar piece of doggerel indeed, but it made me laugh by dint of its vulgarity. And so did “ Polly Perkins of Paddington Green,” “ Champagne Charley,” “ In the Strand,” “ Tommy Dodd,” “ Pretty See-usan,” “ The Chickaleary Bloke,” “ The Rollicking Rams,” “ Walking in the Zoo,” “ Slap Bang,” “ The Burlington Arcade,” and a score of other popular compositions, which were whistled and howled, and brass and string-banded in a fashion which is unknown to the youth of the fag-end of the century. Even now, I look back upon the Lion Comique with regret. He was not, perhaps, so artistic as is the modern vocalist

in sloppy evening dress or costermonger's garb, but he was most impertinently impressive, and when he rises from the dead—as assuredly he will one of these days, together with true burlesque in the theatres—he will be received with all the applause bestowed on the Great Vance, George Leybourne and Walter Laburnum in the decades that are no more.

A strange occurrence befell us when we left the Oxford. As we were getting into our hansom (which prodigally we had kept), a man, who looked like a porter, rushed forward and exclaimed: "Did you call this evening at Smith's Hotel in Park Street?"

"Find out," answered Tony.

"I have found out!" growled the man; and aiming a blow with a thick stick at my comrade, he cried: "Take that, you blasted spy!"

"And you take that," said Tony, who was standing on the step, as he dodged the stick. He bent down and hit his assailant full in the face. The man uttered a howl of pain and execration, his cap fell off as he reeled, and I recognised Flaherty, to my great dismay.

"Quick!" said Tony coolly to the cabman, "drive on. Evans's!"

I looked out as the Jehu lashed his horse. Flaherty had disappeared.

CHAPTER TENTH

AT EVANS'S AND ELSEWHERE

MANY of those, who foregather nowadays at the National Sporting Club in King Street, Covent Garden, have but little idea of what the interior looked like when it was Evans's Supper Rooms. I mean Evans's in its palmy days, before a mistaken policy permitted women of the town to invade the picture gallery, and drove old *habitués* from their favourite haunt. True it is that ladies were permitted to go into the boxes, but they were as carefully covered by wire screens as are nuns in some of the Continental opera-houses. It was considered a "fast" thing for fashionable dames and damsels to sup at Evans's while listening to the solo-singing and the glees. How the daughters and grand-daughters of these same ladies would turn up their noses at the mildness of the entertainment! The forbidden fruit of my youth was a very mild apple, and could not be compared to the prickly pear now in vogue.

When Anthony and I reached the hall there was but a sprinkling of guests, for it was only half-past ten, and the choir was loosing forth "See our oars with feathered spray" to a highly unsympathetic audience, but I need not say that I was bewildered with this wondrous cave of harmony. I inspected all the portraits, and was presented by Anthony to an

affable old gentleman in a swallow-tail, who offered me his snuff-box with such pertinacity, that I felt bound to take a pinch, and as I did so I remembered Aunt Penelope's mull, with its splendid cairngorm. The snuff on the present occasion seemed to be made of cayenne pepper, and I nearly sneezed my head off after accepting the pinch. Anthony and the old gentleman roared with laughter at my convulsions. "Eton boy, is he?" I heard the latter remark; "well, he's up to snuff now," and he chuckled as he went off to greet another acquaintance.

"That's Paddy Green," said Anthony.

"Who's he?" I asked, when by long and strong blowings I had cleared my nostrils.

"I don't know whether he's the proprietor or the manager, but I don't believe his name's Green. I'm sure he must be the ghost of the original Evans, and condemned to live here till the place falls down."

"Well," I said, "he's a very substantial ghost, judging by the way he's shaking hands with those old fellows at that corner table."

"Old!" cried Anthony; "I only wish they could hear you! Why, they're the leading lights of the law, literature, and Dutch courage. The man with the grey Dundreary whiskers and the cock-sure look is none other than Mr Serjeant Tanglefoot, the counsel who turns witnesses inside out, as easily as you would a glove. The one next to him with the white head and the keen black eyes is Mr Van Rotter, the great diamond merchant; while the third man with his hat cocked on one side and the don't-care-a-button air is Mr Lyonesse, one of the proprietors of the *Daily Courant*. They come here every night, and Lord! what stories they do tell, to be sure. Sometimes I

manage to get alongside of them. Tanglefoot's a rare treat. One evening Lyoness—he's a Jew, you know—said to the Serjeant: 'I'm going to a fancy dress ball next week; what should you suggest as an appropriate Shakespearian character?' 'Ham-lick,' answered Tanglefoot, as quick as the snap of a rat-trap. No one laughed more than Lyoness himself. I've seen some queer things here, young feller," he added, as we seated ourselves at the table designated to Reggie Gregory. "There was a middle-aged man, with sandy hair and blue spectacles, who used to come to this very table every night, and always have the same supper—kidneys, baked potatoes, and a pint of stout. 'He never spoke to nobody, and nobody spoke to him,' as the song goes. When he wasn't eating and drinking, he'd be making notes in a pocket-book. One night he was brushing past me to get out, when something fell on to my knees out of the pocket of the overcoat which he carried on his arm. When he had gone, I examined the treasure trove. It was a little round dial attached to a tiny clockwork arrangement. 'Young feller,' I said to myself, 'this wasn't made for a watch; I'll find out what it is.' So the next morning I went down to the Lost Property Office at Scotland Yard, and reported my find. The serjeant who had care of the department pulled a funny face, when he saw what it was I handed in. 'Wait a minute,' he said, and vamosed. Presently he came back and asked me to follow him. I began to think that I was going to make the acquaintance of Black Maria. Rather nervous, I was shown into the presence of a gentleman, whom I knew to be the Chief Commissioner of Police. He had the dial in his hand. Having very politely invited

me to take a seat, he asked me where I had found the disc. I told him all I knew about it. 'Would you recognise the man again?' asked the Chief Commissioner. 'Well, I ought to,' I answered, 'considering I've seen him, off and on, at Evans's for nearly a year, and always in the same spot.' 'Sandy hair and blue spectacles, I think you said,' went on Sir Richard. 'Just so,' I replied. 'Curious,' he muttered to himself, as he read a paper which he had taken from his desk. Then turning to me, he said: 'Now, Mr Fuller, I am going to be frank with you. I have every reason to believe that the owner of this dial is a man for whom we have been looking for a long time. He is a dangerous Anarchist, convicted of murder in France, and wanted by the Imperial Government. This harmless-looking bit of metal is the mainspring of an infernal machine. I ask you to go to Evans's to-night. Should your man arrive—as he is pretty sure to do, after missing this piece of mechanism—kindly drop your stick on the floor. That is all. I need scarcely say that I rely on your secrecy, the more so as, should the criminal be captured, you will be entitled to a reward of £250. May I count upon your services?' Naturally I said he might, but I didn't half like the job, Jack, I can tell you. Well, sure enough, at his usual time, in came the sandy-haired man. When he had taken his seat, he asked the waiter if he had picked up a diamond ring, which he had dropped somewhere the night before. I knew that this was only a feeler. Naturally the waiter said he hadn't, and as he left off speaking I dropped my stick. In less time than it takes me to tell you, the sandy-haired man yelled '*Trahi!*' or some such word, hurled a glass bottle at my head, which shivered

on the wall, and my gentleman, howling and struggling, was being handcuffed by four plain-clothes bobbies. Lord! how he did scream and swear. He bit one constable's finger clean off, and nearly broke another's leg by his kicks, and when they got him up, lo and behold! he was no longer sandy, but black and beardless. There was a fine hubbub, I can tell you. His name was Anatole Krobinski, and a more bloody-minded wretch was never guillotined."

"Did you get the reward?" I asked.

"Yes," said Anthony, with one of his queer looks, "and I daresay you'll think me a blithering idiot, young feller, but badly as I wanted 'ready,' I sent the stuff anonymously to the girl with whom this scoundrel lived. Hullo! here's your friend, Franklyn."

Sure enough, there was Master Reggie, right glad to come across friends among so many strange faces, for while Tony had been talking, the hall had been filling. We ordered the favourite supper of the late Anatole Krobinski, and how we did enjoy it! Where did Evans's get those mammoth mealy potatoes, which crumbled into snow-white flour beneath the pressure of the waiter's napkined hand? Where did Evans's procure those succulent kidneys, which, cooked to a turn, might vie with the choicest cookery of the Café Anglais or Bignon's? No one has seen and ~~tasted~~ such potatoes and kidneys since. When Evans's passed away, they became as extinct as the dodo.

When the choir-boys, with their hands behind them, had delivered the fine old glee, "See our Oars with Feathered Spray," Reggie enquired who was the "warrior hermit" whom the oarsmen meant to "restore."

"Warrior Hermit?" snorted Anthony, with his

mouth full of kidney ; "why, he won the Derby, of course, in a snow-storm—belongs to Mr Parsons." He said this quite seriously, and could not make out why Reggie and I rolled about with laughter.

"Look here, young fellers," he exclaimed, "it's all very well laughing, but what I state is a fact. The Marquis of Eastbourne got prettily well peppered over that Derby, as no doubt you've heard, but perhaps you don't know that one of his lordship's own following was prevented from losing £10,000 by your obedient servant. I was only a solicitor's boy-clerk at the time, but it's true as I'm speaking to you. My employer was what is called a shady customer, and took up all sorts of grisly business—doubtful bills, dirty cases, and the like. Now one of his clients was a man named Bishop, a kind of aristocratic tout, who gave out that he was possessed of as many stable secrets as some men are of broad acres. He was under some obligation to Richard Rogerson, Esquire, my employer ; what it was I don't know—perhaps they had robbed a church together. Anyway, they were as thick as thieves ought to be. Well, the week before the Derby he came into the office in a deuce of a hurry, and asked for Rogerson. I told him that the eminent lawyer was out. 'Well, I can't stop,' he said, 'I'll write him a note'; and catching hold of a pen and piece of paper, he wrote a few lines, blotted them, put his epistle into an envelope, and hurried away. He had a cab waiting outside. Mr Bishop wasn't aware that he had used copying ink, but I was, and when he'd gone I took the liberty of holding the blotting-paper up to the light. This is what I read :

'DEAR DICK—The Friar is *all right again*. Never mind present or starting price, but put your shirt on.—Yrs., BEN.'

"I wasn't much the wiser when I'd deciphered the communication. 'The Friar! the Friar!' I kept repeating to myself, 'there's no horse called the Friar.' I knew the note referred to the Derby, because I'd overheard Bishop tell my guv'nor he'd give him the winner. While I was trying to puzzle the matter out, another client—Sir Y. Z. I'll call him, not that he was a wise-head by any means—entered the office. He was a sporting baronet, and a great friend of the marquis, Peter Pilkington, and all that lot, as generous a chap as ever lived, and a gentleman from the top of his head to the tip of his big toenails. He'd often given me a tip, and, more, put me on five pounds to nothing about one of his fancies. But he'd galloped through a deal of cash, or you may be sure he'd not have been in Rogerson's hands. I told him the writter was out. He cursed freely, but in a light-hearted way. 'Anything I can do for you, Tony?' he asked. I hesitated for a moment, and then I told him about Bishop, and showed him the blotting-paper. 'By God!' he said, 'Macheaven means to do us after all. Now Tony, my boy, I'm going to ask a favour of you.' Don't breathe a word of this to any one. Tear that blotting-paper up. Perhaps, unknowingly, you've saved one of the best fellows that ever stepped from perdition. Now promise me.' I readily promised him, the more so as he flung a crisp fiver on to my desk as he spoke. 'Now remember, Tony,' he exclaimed, 'not a word, and if this does come off, you shan't regret this day. I'll be even with Master Bishop yet.' So saying, he skedaddled as quickly as did the aristocratic tout. I knew afterwards that he went straight to the marquis, and told him what he had learnt, that 'the

Friar' of Bishop's note was Warrior Hermit, and that Lord Eastbourne swore he wouldn't hedge a shilling. But Y. Z. did, and instead of losing £15,000 over Lady Belinda, he won, as I said, £10,000 over Mr Parsons's rough-coated colt. I know this all the more, because on the Monday after the Derby he sent me a £500 Bank of England note by special messenger, and, greatly to Rogerson's surprise, I cut the shop, and started for myself, when I wasn't much older than you, young fellers."

Just as Anthony had finished this interesting recital, an elderly man, evidently a clergyman, sat down at our table without taking the slightest notice of us.

"You can be by yourself, over there," said Anthony, "that table is quite empty."

"I sit where I please," replied the Man of Sermons. "If you find my company distasteful, young man, you and those lads, who ought to be in bed, can move to the table which you indicate."

Anthony's eyes glistened with rage, but his demeanour was perfectly calm.

"I'm sorry I have offended you, sir," he said humbly, "the more so because your son——" here he stopped.

"My son!" said the parson, very much surprised. "What on earth do you know about my son?"

"I'd rather not say," faltered Anthony.

"Come, sir," cried the clergyman irritably, striking the table with the handle of a knife. "You have mentioned the name of my son Harold, and I insist upon knowing what it was that you were going to say."

"Well," said Anthony, with a tender tremor in his voice; "I regret to state, that Harold has got into trouble."

"Got into trouble!" almost shouted the parson, dropping his fork on to his plate; "what do you mean?"

"I can only repeat what I said," observed Anthony quietly. "When you came in, I suggested that you should go to that table, because I wished to talk to you privately, but as it is, I have no help for it but to tell you before my young friends that Harold is in the greatest need of your immediate rescue. In fact—I break the news with great reluctance—he has, unhappy boy! pledged himself to marry one of the barmaids at the Blue Posts Tavern in Cork Street, where, if I mistake not, you will find him at the present moment."

"Good God!" groaned the unhappy cleric; "and he has to go up for examination on Monday!"

"I am well aware of that," said Anthony, imperturbably. "That is the reason why I venture to disturb your supper."

"Disturb my supper! Harold marry a barmaid!" ejaculated the distressed parent. "What, sir, am I to do? What am I to do. It will break his mother's heart."

"It is now twenty minutes to twelve," said Anthony; "the Blue Posts does not close till midnight. If you hurry up, and take a good hansom, you'll be just in time to save your unfortunate son from wrecking his whole career."

The clergyman, without another word, picked up his hat and umbrella, and would have bolted from the hall, but for being stopped at the entrance by the bill collector, to whom he flung half-a-sovereign in payment for his uneaten supper, and, without waiting for the change, he clambered up the steps

with the agility of a monkey. Anthony lay back in his seat and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Do you know this Harold—his son?" asked Reggie anxiously.

"Never set eyes on him in my life," answered the incorrigible Anthony; "but I'll teach an old buffer like that not to try and ride the elevated steed over me."

Then he laughed heartily again, and so, I'm not ashamed to state, did Reggie and I.

"And now, young fellers," quoth Anthony, "we must be moving. I'm sorry, Mr Gregory, that I can't ask you to come to the Athenæum with Jack, but he and I have to meet the Bishop of London to discuss the subject of his discourse to-morrow."

"All right," said Reggie, "would you mind suggesting to his lordship the text: 'See, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, redeeming the time.'"

Anthony gave Reggie one of his queer glances. "The pawnbrokers' shops ain't open so late," he observed; "and the Bishop don't take his text from Shakespeare."

Reggie and I laughed again, as Anthony settled with the waiter at the door. In his methods of calculation he seemed to rival the renowned Oscar of the Café Regent. "Kidneys, four-and-six, potatoes, six shillings, bread, six-and-eight—no butter, seven shillings, three pints, eight-and-six, welch rabbit, nine-and-six, brandy - and - soda, ten-and-ninepence, no cigars, eleven shillings"—this he rattled off with the speed of the Scotch express. Anthony chuckled, and, like the clergyman, tossed him half-a-sovereign,

and, bidding us follow him, ran up the steps, regardless of the man's expostulations. Having bidden Reggie "Good-night," Anthony and I were soon on our way to the Tiptoff Club.

On arriving at that establishment, which was situated in a very dark street in Soho, I was surprised to see a big oaken door, with a *grille* in it, before us. No lights were visible in the windows. Anthony gave three taps with his stick on the door. The *grille* opened, and a voice exclaimed, "Who's there?"

"Don Cæsar!" replied Anthony.

The door immediately flew open, and disclosed a small hall, with a single gas burner over a table on which was a large book. The man, who had opened the door was a negro, who eyed me suspiciously.

"All right!" said Anthony. "My guest. Give me the book."

The negro opened the volume, and handed him a pen. Anthony wrote in it—"Visitor—Jack Sheppard, Esq.; *introduced by* Don Cæsar de Bazan."

"You see," said Anthony, "we're travelling *incog*. It don't do to put the right names on paper at a place which is sure to be raided sooner or later."

I may here remark incidentally, that the Tiptoff was invaded by the police that very summer, and the worthy magistrate, before whom the proprietor and others were summoned, openly expressed his surprise that among the frequenters of the Club were, according to the book of members and their guests: "Jonathan Wild," "Blueskin," "Sir Roland Trenchard," "Dick Turpin," "Claude Duval," "Robinson Crusoe," "Haroun al Raschid," "The

Count of Monte-Cristo," "Jack Sheppard," and "Don Cæsar de Bazan."

Anthony led the way down a gloomy flagged passage, when we came to another big door furnished with a *grille* like the first. Anthony again tapped three times, and on being challenged returned, "Open Sesame." The door opened, and my eyes were fairly blinded by the vivid glare, which burst upon them after the darkness through which we had just passed. We found ourselves in a spacious ante-room, surrounded by velvet couches and settees, and adorned with flowers, ferns, and palms, while in the centre a little fountain played into a marble basin, in which gold and silver fish were disporting themselves. On the right was a bureau, in which sat a buxom damsel with a cherry-coloured Alsatian bow in her dark hair, who took our hats, sticks, and overcoats, and gave us numbered vouchers for the same. Sounds of melody were wafted through an open portal draped with pink brocaded curtains. We stepped through them, and entered a brilliantly-lighted ball-room, round which many couples were gyrating to the soft strains of the *Blue Danube* waltz, exquisitely rendered by a string-band in white military uniforms. Never had I looked upon such an entrancing spectacle. The cavaliers, tripping the light fantastic, were all in faultless evening dress. Their partners, very much *decolletées*, displayed the most elegant gowns, and the show of jewellery would have been remarkable at a Court Ball. I gasped with amazement. Remember, that I was only a school-boy, and wholly unaccustomed to any Terpsichorean entertainment of greater pretensions than a sober dance in the country.

"A 1, ain't it?" said Anthony, noting my surprise. "It isn't called the Tiptoff Club for nothing. Hallo! young feller, what's up?" he cried, as I staggered forward, and caught hold of the back of a gilt arm-chair.

"There! there!" I stammered, pointing to a pair of dancers who whirled by us. They were Tabby, in a sheeny floating gown, and the gentleman with the waxed moustache, whom she had addressed as "One Eye," at the Alhambra.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Anthony contemptuously. "Is that all? Hasn't Tabby a right to enjoy herself, young feller, especially when she's under the care of such a highly respectable nobleman as Lord Clacton."

"Lord Clacton?" I said savagely. "Why, she told me that man was the burlesque writer—I forget his name—at the Spree Theatre."

"Oh, she told you that, did she!" observed Anthony, with a malicious grin. "I always said that Tabby ought to get top weight in the Sapphira Handicap. What did I warn you about last night, Master Jack, when you took the needle like a sewing machine? Bother Tabby, come and have a glass of fizz." And taking my arm, he drew me from the ball to an adjacent apartment, set out with little tables, and having a great and gorgeous bar at one end of it. Powdered flunkies, with gold *aiguillettes* and black silk stockings, waited on the noisy revellers, who clamoured for refreshment. Scarcely had we put our lips to the champagne, when another surprise awaited me. A familiar voice behind me said persuasively, "Try a brandy cock-tail, Minnie. It's no end of a pick-me-up."

I turned round quickly, and my glance met that of the Wicked Uncle, whom I supposed to be in China. I don't know which of us was the more amazed, but he was the first to speak.

"By Aaron's rod!" he ejaculated. "What are *you* doing here, Nephew Jack?"

He rose, and came to me with outstretched hand, and as he did so, I saw that his companion was none other than Mrs Sharraton, whom Anthony and I had tracked only a few hours previously with Mr Flaherty to Smith's Hotel. I wrung Uncle Philip's hand, but for the life of me I could not speak. Anthony glibly explained the reason of my presence. Then the Wicked Uncle in his turn stated how he had been hurriedly summoned back from Hong-Kong; how he had arrived in London, late in the afternoon, from Boulogne, had seen my name in the paper, as playing for Eton, and speeded up to Lords, only to find the match over and the gates shut. After dining at the Rag, he had, quite by chance, met Mrs Sharraton at the Sprce, and brought her on to the Tiptoff "for a bit of a hop."

"Here, Minnie," he cried to the widow of Torquay, who looked remarkably attractive in heliotrope-coloured gauze. "Here's an old friend. My nephew Jack, who's been distinguishing himself at Lords to-day."

Mrs Sharraton smiled sweetly, displaying the very beautiful little teeth, with which some beneficent fairy—I trust Nature—had endowd her.

"What, Jack Franklyn?" she cooed softly. "My dear boy, how you've grown. I declare I can see signs of a moustache."

I blushed and nervously shifted from one leg to the other, like an awkward young elephant.

"Wasn't it curious," she went on, "that I should meet Captain Franklyn at the theatre? But I felt so lonely after my solitary chop at Charing Cross, that I felt I must have a little amusement to raise my spirits."

My brain whirled. With my own eyes I had seen her feasting with Flaherty at the Café Regent; with the same orbits I had seen them go into Smith's Hotel, and now she talked with an innocent smile of the Charing Cross and chops!

"Where are you staying, Jack?" asked the Wicked Uncle. "I must see you in the morning."

"At Mrs B.'s," put in Anthony. "And, by Jove! here's her lovely niece."

Yes! Tabby, all unconscious of me, was advancing on the arm of the honourable "One Eye," Lord Clacton. When she perceived me she gave a slight scream, but recovered herself immediately. Beaming with smiles, she dropped her convoy, and sailed towards us.

"Jack! You naughty boy!" she cried; "what are *you* doing here?" (just as the Wicked Uncle had done) "and Captain Franklyn too! Welcome back to England, Captain! What do you think of little Tabby now?"

"I think you're clipper-built," answered Uncle Philip heartily, surveying her with undisguised admiration. Mrs Sharraton frowned; Anthony laughed; I took no notice of Tabby, but said to Tony: "Hadn't we better pay for our drinks and go away?"

"Pay for drinks!" he said; "there's no cashing up

here. It's all free gratis for nothing. Come with me, and I'll show you why."

"Jack, I want to speak to you," exclaimed Tabby, as we walked away. I took no notice of her appeal, but followed Anthony.

CHAPTER *THE INTERVENTION OF*
ELEVENTH *THE WICKED UNCLE*

WE passed from the buffet into a chamber where dead silence prevailed. Shaded lamps cast a rosy light on a long table, round which were seated forty or fifty men and women, and as many more were standing behind their chairs. The table was covered with a painted cloth, divided into numbered squares, strewn with gold and bank-notes. At its head an official was turning a wheel, into which he dropped a little ball. By his side stood two liveried individuals with long rakes. As we entered, the wheel was spinning, and its circling was watched with nervous eagerness by most of those in the room. I need scarcely say that they were gamblers, and that the game was roulette. In those days baccarat was in its infancy, solo whist had not been invented, and poker had not crossed the Atlantic. At some tables, at the far end of the saloon, a select few were playing *Ecartè*, so Anthony informed me in a whisper. I paid no attention to them. I was attracted only by the roulette. The more I watched, the more I desired to join the fray. I felt in my pockets and found six pounds, the remainder of ten, which Mr Magoy had advanced to me for my expenses in London. I felt absolutely callous of consequences after seeing Tabby, and

leaning over a full-bosomed lady, who reeked of patchouli, I flung a couple of sovereigns on to the square labelled 35. Why I was attracted to that particular number I know not, but I was.

Anthony expostulated in a hoarse whisper. "I say, young feller, this won't do."—I shook his hand angrily off my shoulder. The two sovereigns were promptly raked in by the officials. Nothing daunted, I immediately placed my remaining gold pieces on the same spot. The wheel went round fast, slower, and stopped. "Thirty-five," said the banker. In a sort of dream I picked up my stake and £150. Anthony was fairly frightened.

"Come away, young feller," he said. "Come away, nobody goes *en plein*."

"Well, I'm going anyway," I retorted, and put down the sovereigns on that seductive 35. Again the wheel revolved, and again the Croupier said "35." The hardened gamblers turned round and stared at the beardless boy, with the Cap of Fortunatus, as I placed "three hundred of the best," as Anthony subsequently described my winnings, in my trousers pocket. I was once more about to try my luck, when I was jerked violently round, and was confronted by the Wicked Uncle, his face livid with passion.

"Come out of this, you young scapegrace," he hissed in my ear, "or, by Aaron's rod! I'll carry you away. As to you," he said fiercely to Anthony, "I'd like to keel-haul you."

"It isn't his fault," I said defiantly. "I, and only I, am responsible for my actions. He tried to stop me."

"Then I beg pardon," said the Wicked Uncle, in a kindlier tone. "But come, away, Jack, at once." And

he hauled me out of the room, amid 'a ripple of laughter from those gamblers who had noted the scene. Most of them were too occupied with their own speculations to notice my abrupt departure.

"Now, Anthony Fuller," said my uncle imperiously, "I place this mutinous young dog under arrest. Take him off to his bunk at once, and I'll court-martial him to-morrow. Good-morning, Master Jack, good-morning!" he added sarcastically; "look out for hurricanes." And he rolled back to the buffet, where I saw him sink on to a couch beside the fair widow Sharraton. I felt half-inclined to resist his interference, and I could see that Anthony did not much appreciate being ordered about in this quarter-deck fashion. However, he said gruffly: "You'd better go, young feller, it's no good combing Nunky's hair the wrong way." And he led me to the ante-room, where lo! and behold, to my great disgust, we came upon Tabby and "One Eye," the peer. They were evidently not on the best of terms. I heard Tabby say: "No, I won't." Whereupon Lord Clacton exclaimed savagely: "You're nothing better than a ——!" I did not hear the end of his speech, for Tabby snatched a vase off a side-table and brought it down plump on his bald pate. She stood panting with consternation and rage, as he lay motionless on the ground. The Alsatian woman in charge of the cloaks uttered a dismal howl, and fainted. Anthony and I rushed to pick his lordship up. He groaned, and subsided into an easy chair.

"He's all right," said Anthony. "Jack, take Tabby home; we mustn't have a row here. I'll bring your things."

Tabby's defiant mood changed. She burst into

tears, and clutching me by the elbow she exclaimed nervously: "Yes, Jack, dear Jack, take me home."

I forgot everything but my desire to save her. I opened the ante-room door softly—the janitor was not at his post; we fled down the gloomy passage. The negro, who was fast asleep, I awakened by a kick on his shins. I put a sovereign into his hand, and as the dawn was beginning to break, Tabby and I set off for Bloomsbury, on foot. A nice couple we looked. She without cloak or wrapper; I, hatless, and without an overcoat. Luckily, in Oxford Street, we came across a four-wheeler. I handed Tabby in. We had not spoken a word since our exodus. Now she showed no penitence for her assault on Lord Clacton. On the contrary, she exclaimed: "I wish I'd killed him—I wish I'd killed him, and it was for your sake, Jack, that I offended him. For you, my dearest, for you!" She covered my face with burning kisses, and lay in my arms till we arrived at the hotel.

"I'm so thirsty, Jack," she said, when we got inside. "I know auntie has left some drinks out in Number Three."

I was thirsty, too, and when we heard Anthony Fuller arrive about six o'clock we were still in that—to me—lethal chamber. Anthony reported that Lord Clacton had come to, and wanted nothing but a day's rest, and some sticking-plaster, to be himself again.

"I'm sorry for it!" said Tabby, as she picked up her wholly unnecessary candlestick, and flew upstairs. Anthony, having given me my belongings, suggested that we should follow her example. It is scarcely conceivable that, until I emptied my pockets, I had totally forgotten No. 35, and my run of luck. All my thoughts had been of Tabby

since the assault on Lord Clacton, and, as I sunk into a heavy sleep, were still of Tabby.

When I awoke late in the afternoon the events of the last two days whirled through my mind with the rapidity of a kaleidoscope. So incredible did my adventures appear, that it was not until I looked upon the roll of bank-notes and heaps of gold lying on the dressing-table, that I realised I was in my right senses. One fact became patent to me, and that was, that I could no longer submit to school on Friday morning, a boy. Now I was a man. I had eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and I knew that other fare would pall upon my appetite. What should I do? I was just eighteen, and big and tall for my age. Should I enlist? I had known a lad, who, unable to pass the Army Examination, had taken the Queen's shilling, and was now in a fair way to get his commission. Anyway, I should first of all have to hear what the Wicked Uncle had to say. As I dressed, I wondered why Tabby had told me that lie about Lord Clacton; why Uncle Philip called Mrs. Sharraton by her Christian name; what Anthony Fuller meant by saying that Tabby had gone to tea with her uncle; why Mrs. Sharraton told that deliberate falsehood about dining by herself at the Charing Cross Hotel? To none of these mental queries could I give satisfactory answers. Then my thoughts reverted to Tabby and the terrible seductiveness of her love-making, and the while I hated myself for my weakness, I longed to be with the enchantress again. Having stowed away my winnings in my hat-box, I crept downstairs to find that Tabby was still in her room, that Anthony had gone out, and that Mrs. Bottlestrap was at church.

I was rather surprised at this latter circumstance, but on mentioning it to Anthony, he said: "The old harridan does it for exactly the same reason that I take off my hat to a sweep—for luck."

The Wicked Uncle had not given me any trysting place, nor had he mentioned any hour for our meeting, but I felt pretty certain that if I looked him up at the "Rag" I should find him. Nor was I mistaken. Two minutes after I had sent in my name Uncle Philip appeared in the hall.

"Hullo! my young skylarker," he said, "how are the binnacle lights to-day? Come in, and have a bit of lunch."

We had a very cheery meal. The Wicked Uncle made no allusion to the events of the night, but regaled me with stories of the Far East. He was particularly smitten with the Japanese ladies. "Sweet little kittens," he ejaculated, "who get hold of one's heart, and twist it here and there and everywhere, till it gets in such a tangle that it takes you a month of Sundays to get it straight again."

He also recounted a yarn about a bear which tickled my fancy. He said: "The Admiral put me in charge of a transport at Yokohama, and sent me to Hong-Kong to bring off some men and stores just arrived from England. The transport was a beastly little paddle-wheel craft, full of cockroaches, and a rotten sea boat, but as I was my own s'ripper, I didn't much care about a little discomfort. Well, I reached Hong-Kong all right, took my papers up to the Admiral's office, and set about collecting my cargo and passengers. The latter consisted of fourteen or fifteen blue-jackets, three or four jollies——"

"Jollies!" I interrupted, "what are jollies?"

"Marines," replied the Wicked Uncle tersely, and went on, "also a purser's clerk, and a couple of midshipmites. The stores, as far as I could make out, were mostly cases of champagne for the Admiral, which I was glad to note, for he often invited me to dine with him. Well, I'd got everything ship-shape, and as the sights of Hong-Kong had drained most of the yellow-boys from my fob, I thought it about time to set sail for Japan. On the morning of the day before that I had fixed on for our departure, I was at the Club taking a peg, when a young chap, in the uniform of a naval lieutenant, came up, saluted me, and said he had a favour to ask. I ordered him something to cool his coppers, and told him to spit it out—the favour, not the grog. It seems he had been sent out from Bombay in a great hurry, to join the *Royal Duchess*. Why, he didn't know, but there he was. His name was Cowdenhove. Now his ship had gone to Yokohama, and how to reach her he didn't know. Would I give a passage? He was sick of kicking about Victoria, and none of the Government Agents would help him because he was not on the lists sent out by the Admiralty, the noble lords whereof had apparently forgotten his existence. 'Well,' I said, 'you're not on my list either.' However, he begged and prayed so hard for me to take him, that at last I agreed. 'But,' I said, 'we sail at cockcrow to-morrow morning, so you'd better come on board late to-night, so that no one will see you slip your cable. I'll give the necessary orders for getting your hammock slung.' He was profuse in his thanks. We had another peg together, and then he went

off to pack his chest, and I to make arrangements for berthing my gentleman. I found that there were two cabins empty, so picked him out the better one, and thought I'd done my duty. That night I went to Government House, where there was a ball, and being fond of letting my toes run loose, I did not get back to the transport till nearly daylight. I felt dog-tired, and having given orders about sailing to the mate (we had mates in the Royal Navy in those days), I turned in for forty winks. I was awoke by the most unholy shindy I ever heard in my life. Yells and shouts were jumbled up with the crashing of crockery and the breaking of furniture. Slipping on my trousers, I was soon on the scene of the uproar. 'What's all this?' I cried. 'It's a bear, sir,' panted one of the midship-mites, 'in the steward's pantry. 'A bear!' I screamed. 'Yes, sir, Mr Cowdenhove brought him on board, and Mr Liphook'—he was the quartermaster—'shut him up for the night in the empty cabin. The steward's boy, going to call Mr Cowdenhove, opened the wrong door, the bear bolted out, knocked the boy over, and ran on deck. There every one chivied the brute, but he got away, and ran to earth in the pantry.' I won't repeat my language, but it was strictly against the Articles of War. All this time that brute of a bear was dancing a hornpipe among the china and glass, all of which I knew I must make good.

"'By Aaron's rod!' I shouted; 'what's to be done, Mr Cowdenhove?' 'I'm awfully sorry, sir,' he stammered; 'but it was a pet given to me by the Rajah of Kutcharibad, so I thought I'd send it home to the Zoo.' 'I wish they'd send you home,' I cried, 'and

stuff you in the monkey-house. What do you suggest?' 'Well,' he said, 'if you were to put some fruit and treacle outside the door, and then break it down, he'd be sure to come out if every one kept quiet.' 'And what then?' I asked impatiently. 'Then I'll catch him,' replied Cowdenhove. 'He's got a collar round his neck—all I want is a stout boat-hook.' I saw there was some sense in his idea, so I made every one stand clear and carried out his suggestion. The door was battered down, the noise ceased, and presently Master Bruno shoved his snout out and sniffed suspiciously. Then catching sight of the eatables, he made for the bucket of molasses, but scarcely had he dipped his beak in when Cowdenhove slipped the boat-hook through his collar. The bear, who was a strong beast, though not very big, gave a tremendous pull, Cowdenhove missed his footing and fell head foremost into the bucket of treacle. No one of us could help roaring with laughter, as Cowdenhove spluttered and swore, and the bear growled with rage and fright. However, Cowdenhove held on pluckily to the boat-hook, and some of the blue-jackets having lashed ropes round Master Bruno, he was very speedily a prisoner of war. I ordered him off to execution, but Cowdenhove, with the molasses running down from his hair and face, begged me to spare the brute's life. I pointed to the pantry, which looked as if it had been entered by a round shot.

"I'll pay all damages, sir," he said pleadingly. 'Well, what's to be done with him?' I asked. Here the carpenter stepped forward, and said that, with my permission, he'd rig up a den for the bear in half an hour with some old packing-cases. I agreed to this,

Master Bruno was not swung up, and before we got to Yokohama was as tame as might be, and a great favourite with every one. He was one of these little Indian hill bears, and as comical a cuss as you'd wish to clap eyes on."

"What became of him?" I asked.

"Oh! the skipper of the *Royal Duchess* wouldn't rate Master Bruno on his books, so Cowdenhove sent him ashore, and sold him for forty dollars to a Japanese daimio. I don't want to be shipmates again with a bear though, comical as he may be. Now, my lad, just come into the smoking-room, for I've got to pitch a broadside into you."

When we had brought ourselves "to an anchor," as the Wicked Uncle put it, he said: "Now, my young scapegrace, you needn't be afraid; I'm not going to rake you fore and aft. I've been young myself, but I ask you what I asked Cowdenhove—'What's to be done?' The fact is, you're too old to be at school. If I'd been at home you'd have left Eton a year ago."

"I don't want to go back there any more," I blurted out; "I can't, Uncle Philip, I can't. It's very near the end of the Half."

"But how's it to be managed? Stop! Didn't you swoon, or something of the sort, at Lords?"

"Yes." I told him of my fainting, which, indeed, I need not have done, for there were long accounts of the match in both the *Observer* and *Sunday Times*, in which my pluck, when physically upset, was held forth as an example to the youth of Great Britain.

"Very good," said the Wicked Uncle; "I shall go down to Eton to-morrow, and see the headmaster, your tutor, and your dame, and tell them that, in my opinion, you are not fit to return; and,

by Aaron's rod! if they want a surgeon's fist for it, I know where to get the document. But, in the meantime, where are you to take up your quarters? I'm not going to let you stay on at Bottlestrap's, and be taken into all sorts of hell-fire shops by that rascalion, Anthony Fuller. There's only one harbour of refuge I can think of, and that's your Uncle Theobald's rectory at Glentroughton. I haven't seen him for a long spell——"

"I've never seen him," I broke in.

"All the better," said the Wicked Uncle. "I'll write and ask him if he'll take you in, till I find a good crammer for you, either at home or abroad, for I suppose you're bound to be an ambassador, like your grandfather, Lord MacWashington. It's a pity you weren't drafted into the Navy trade like George, who's sharpening his grinders on salt junk in the Pacific, while you're making your head ache with bad fizz at night-houses. What d'ye think of my plan, youngster?"

"But supposing Uncle Theobald can't have me?" I urged. Inwardly I thought the plan horrible, and sought a loophole of escape.

"Don't let that distress you, my hearty. I shall make it worth his while, at your expense, of course, out of the money allowed by Chancery for your education. Your uncle's a parson, and I never knew a devil-dodger yet who drew back his paw when offered a doubloon. To-night and to-morrow I'll give you a shake-down at my diggings. So, while I'm writing, you slip back to Bottlestrap's, put your traps together, and come back here."

I returned to the hotel in no very pleasant state of mind. I abhorred this notion of going to Uncle

Theobald at Glentroughton. Ever since I could remember, the rector had never taken the least notice of me. That he and the Wicked Uncle did not hit it off was quite apparent, for the gallant mariner never visited his clerical brother. However, like Mr Micawber, I hoped that something would turn up to prevent the proposed arrangement. I went in to the bar-parlour, where I found Mrs Bottlestrap drinking tea, not unflavoured, I fancy, with the contents of a case bottle which stood beside the sugar-basin. I explained briefly that Uncle Philip wished me to leave at once, as he was going down to Eton. The worthy woman fell into the trap at once.

"So you're going back to school, Mr Jack? Well, well, you must come and see me when your 'olidays begin. Tabby will be sorry not to say good-bye."

"Where is Tabby?" I asked. "Has she gone out to tea with her uncle again?"

Mrs Bottlestrap's fat sides shook with laughter. "Oh, you young Turk!" she cackled, "you must 'ave your joke."

"Joke!" I repeated; "I didn't mean any joke. I suppose Tabby has got an uncle just as I have."

Mrs Bottlestrap saw that I was serious, and her merriment dried up. "Lor' bless you, no! Tabby ain't got no uncle. She's alone in the wide, wide world, pore thing, save and excepting 'er loving aunt."

I shook with inward rage. Here was another lie. However, curbing my passion, I said: "Well, where has she gone?"

"I rather think," said Mrs Bottlestrap, so slowly that I perceived she was drawing upon her imagination—"I rather think, from what she said, that she was going with a young lady friend to afternoon service

at Westminster Habby, where the singing is that lovely as to remind one of the cherrybeans. We 'ad a chorister at the Spree in my time, with such a beautiful contralto voice. He come from the Habby, and 'is singing was so 'eavenly that, but for his liking for gin, cold, 'e might 'ave been better than Sims Reeves or Marier."

This farrago of nonsense did not improve me. I felt sure that Mrs Bottlestrap, despite her church-going, also belonged to the school of Sapphira.

"Well," I said impatiently, "I'm sorry not to see her. Say good-bye for me—and please give me my bill."

"Oh! that ain't of no consequence, Mr Jack," returned Mrs Bottlestrap, "I'll send it to the Capting at his Club. Besides, I makes it a rule never to do work on the Sabbath."

As a matter of fact, Mrs Bottlestrap was incapable of making out a bill, and her book-keeper was out.

Five minutes afterwards, I was in a hansom with my bags and my precious hat-box, bowling back to the Rag. At the bottom of Waterloo Place, my charioteer had to pull up suddenly, on account of a coach sweeping round the corner. I looked up, and there on the box-seat, next to a fair-whiskered man in a white hat, with a gardenia in his button-hole, sat Tabby, gorgeously arrayed, laughing loudly, instead of being at her devotions in Westminster Abbey. I ground my teeth—our eyes met. Tabby smiled sweetly, and waved her hand. I scowled, and made no sign of recognition.

"Do you know who's drag that was we met?" I asked the cabman as I paid him his fare.

"In course I do, sir. Not many drivers in London, who don't. That was Sir Percy Spalding's, and he was holdin' the ribbons. A reg'lar rollicking, fly-by-night, Sir Percy. Thank ye, sir."

I entered the Club sick with anger. The Wicked Uncle and I spent a quiet evening and retired early. The shake-down he prepared for me was on a big leather sofa in his little sitting-room. The Uncle's "diggings" consisted of three small apartments and a tiny vestibule, situated at the top of a house in St James' Place. It was before the era of flats, but the rooms were entirely self-contained, being approached by a narrow staircase, with a door at the bottom. They were not spacious, but exceedingly cosy, and adorned with all sorts of curios, which the Wicked One had brought from foreign parts. I had reason to know all these knickknacks pretty well by heart, for I felt like a bear with a sore head, and never moved out of the rooms on the following day, but sent the man of the house, who valeted my Uncle, for such food as I required, pleading indisposition. At the same time I resolved to see Anthony Fuller at the earliest opportunity. Very bitter were my reflections; I thought of my broken school life, of the faithlessness of Tabby, and a score of other disagreeable subjects, which an exciting French novel entirely failed to dissipate.

The Wicked Uncle returned from Eton in high spirits. "It's all settled, my boy," he cried. "They were all as jonnick as possible—quite saw the necessity for your keeping quiet; praised you up to the skies; regretted that you couldn't come back to be hoisted or chaired, or whatever they call it. You're to go down at the beginning of next half to

take leave. So that's off our minds. I looked in at the Club on my way here, and found a wire from your Uncle Theobald. He says:

'Agree to terms. Will call at your Club to-morrow at two, and fetch John.'

"So that again's all right."

"All wrong," thought I, but did not say so. Still saying I did not feel well, I refused to go out with Uncle Philip, and remained indoors to brood over my troubles. I must find some means of escaping the custody of Uncle Theobald. But how? I must consult Anthony Fuller. Of course money would be necessary. A bright idea! I opened the hat-box, took out my winnings, wrapped them up in a piece of brown paper, sealed the packet, and placed it in an inner pocket—which I was rather proud of, being my own invention—of my waistcoat. I felt that I possessed, if need be, the sinews of war.

The next day, just before two o'clock, Uncle Philip and I were looking out of the Club window, when he exclaimed: "Punctual to a tick! There's your Uncle Theobald," pointing to a clergyman striding along Pall Mall.

"Excuse me one moment," I exclaimed hurriedly. I rushed for my hat and umbrella, and greatly to the astonishment of the commissionaire at the door, fled like a lunatic across St James' Square. Why this strange conduct? Only because in Uncle Theobald I recognised the parson upon whom Anthony Fuller had played the practical joke about his son at Evans's!

CHAPTER *I FALL IN AGAIN WITH*
TWELFTH *ANTHONY FULLER*

I SPED along till I reached the Haymarket, where I halted to consider what my next move should be. I felt I had committed an irreparable blunder in taking to my heels, and for a moment I felt inclined to go back to the "Rag," and throw myself upon the mercy of the Rector of Glentroughton. But then I reflected upon the awful way in which Anthony Fuller had sold him. I could fancy his bursting furiously into the Blue Posts, and demanding an interview with the damsel, who had beguiled the affections of his innocent son. No, I felt that I could face a great many things, but not the righteous wrath of Uncle Theobald. "Hang that Anthony Fuller for getting me into this scrape!" I muttered. "What will Uncle Philip think of me? How am I to let him know?" I made these reflections while gazing vacantly into a boot-maker's window. The top-boots, Balmorals, dancing-pumps, and patent leather shoes seemed to dance an infernal reel before me, and the bottles of blacking and varnish to be executing wild *pas seuls*. How long I stared at the foot-coverings, I know not, but I was aroused by a smart slap on the back. I turned angrily round, and was confronted by the grinning countenance of Anthony Fuller himself.

"Hallo! young feller," he cried, "you take a long time choosing your trotter-cases. My friend Captain Bolitho and I have been watching you for the last five minutes, wondering when you intended to take your header through the plate glass."

"That's so, sir, by Gad!" said Captain Bolitho, a military-looking gentleman of auburn hue, with a heavy moustache and an eye-glass. He was very prettily dressed in a grey frock suit, the trousers whereof were so tight, that I wondered how the Captain got into them. He displayed a diamond horseshoe pin in his blue satin scarf, and a red rose in his coat, and carried a gold-headed rattan in his lemon-gloved hands—together a very smart personage, indeed. Anthony introduced us. "Delighted I'm sure to meet any friend of my friend, Captain Fuller," raising his white hat with a flourish.

"Oh," thought I, "Anthony was a doctor on Saturday, now he's a Captain."

"Well," said Anthony, "you appear to be out of sorts—liver wrong, perhaps, or"—he added, with one of his quaint glances—"crossed in love. Speak up, young feller, and see if I may not be able to administer balm to thy lacerated soul. At all events I can soothe thy gullet with a potion. 'Come on, Macduff,'" and slipping his arm through mine, he drew me into a wine-room. The Captain followed us. Anthony ordered a bottle of champagne, and dividing its contents into three soda-water tumblers, dashed each glass plentifully with Angostura bitters, and bade us drink the health of the Queen and "drive dull care away." I certainly felt better after the first draught, and despite the magnificence of the

Captain, I mustered up courage to tell Anthony that I wished to speak to him privately.

"Ah, ah!" observed the Captain with the greatest good humour, "I perceive I am de trop" (he pronounced the words as written), "I will make myself scarce. One word in your ear," he said to Tony, and drawing him on one side, whispered in his ear.

"No, I really can't," said Anthony, "two half bulls—not an oat more."

"So be it," sighed Captain Bolitho, "the beef is better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick." Then Anthony pressed something, which chinked, into the warrior's hand, and the Captain, with a prodigious flourish, swaggered out humming gaily to himself.

"Now, Jack, what's up?" asked Anthony, when the Captain had disappeared.

I told him everything. To my great annoyance, instead of condoling with me in my misfortune, Anthony roared with laughter.

"'Pon my soul," he cried, "this is the best joke I've heard of since Mrs Bottlestrap sent Tabby to Sunday School!"

"I don't see much to laugh at," I said ruefully.

"And so that old devil-dodger was your uncle, was he? Splendid!" And he began his cachinnation again.

"I wish you'd shut up," I burst out angrily, "and try to be serious."

"All right, young feller, all right. Now you ask advice. Well, don't do anything. Lord! I can picture the meeting between the affectionate brothers. Parson, after a bit, thinks he's been sold—remembers he's taken a third-class return—accuses Wicked

Uncle of not playing the right game.* Bad words, general flare-up, and flight of the Parson out of Egypt, leaving the Wicked Uncle cursing everybody, more especially his undutiful nephew."

For the third time he aroused my irritability by an explosion of laughter. I turned my back on him.

"Excuse me," he said apologetically, "but I've just been lunching in royal fashion at the Carlton."

"Look here, Anthony Fuller," I returned. "You needn't tell me any more lies. No strangers are allowed at the Carlton."

"Quite true, young feller," observed Anthony calmly; "but you see I've been lunching with the Head Cook—capital chap, does you splendidly." And he made such a queer grimace, that I could not help smiling.

"That's right," said Anthony. "We're better now. Another of my tonics? No; well, I'll tell you what to do. First, send a wire to the Wicked Uncle, saying you were called away on important business; secondly, come with me, and don't go back till he's simmered down. '*Verb. sap, quod erat demonstrandum*,' as they say in the Classics."

"On one condition, Tony," I said; "that I don't go to Mrs Bottlestrap's."

He paused and stared at me for a moment, and then cried: "You'll do, Master John Franklyn, you'll certainly do! You go to the house of a lonely widow, make love to her beauteous daughter—I mean niece—gain her maiden affection, and then slope to no one knows where, leaving your unhappy victim to break her heart in inconsolable anguish. You'll do, I repeat!"

"I wish you wouldn't talk in that way," I said

testily. "All that rubbish about Tabby may be amusing to you, but I don't see any fun in it. I don't like the lying little wretch."

"Ho! ho!" chuckled Anthony. "So you've found her out already, and I'm not to have my head broken now if I warn you against her. Not that anything I say will be of the faintest use. You'll go back to her like a sparrow to poisoned corn."

"Never! I——"

"Stop," interrupted Anthony. "I don't want to have you up for perjury. Here's the Post Office—go in and send your wire, while I pick out a decent hansom."

When I had despatched the telegram—not without qualms of conscience—I found Anthony ensconced in what he called "a spicy showful."

"Where are we going to?" I asked.

"That's asking questions, my pretty maid," warbled Anthony. Going up Regent Street, he waved his stick, and stopped the cab at Brooks's fruit shop. Presently he reappeared with a basket of magnificent hot-house grapes. He pointed to the fruit, and said as we started: "I'm executing a commission for my respected employer. He knows a lady who is indisposed, and loves the produce of the vine. I am his confidential messenger. They're splendid; just try a few," and he began tucking into the grapes, I following suit, for I did not believe his story, and imagined it to be his airy way of explaining why he had bought them. The further we went, the smaller grew the bunches of grapes, and by the time we stopped at the Angel, Islington, there was not a berry left.

"Here's a pretty go!" exclaimed Anthony, looking

at the empty basket. "What am I 'to do now? They're all gone."

"Why, you don't mean to say, Tony, that what you told me was true?" I exclaimed, quite horrified.

"For once in a way it was," he answered coolly. "Ah! saved!" he cried, jumping out of the cab and making towards a barrow, whereon were displayed bunches of Spanish grapes reposing on sawdust. "How much a pound?" asked Anthony.

"Thruppence," answered the dealer.

"Well, old feller," said Anthony, "I'll spring a halfpenny more if you'll pick out the best, and dust 'em well."

"Right," said the dealer, pulling out a dirty rag and setting to work. "How many'll yer 'ave?"

"Six pounds will do," replied Anthony; "don't trouble to put 'em in a bag. I've a basket here."

The dusting was soon concluded, and Anthony packed the weazened Spaniards into the space but lately occupied by the splendid Hamburgs, carefully covering them over with a piece of pink tissue paper, which he found at the bottom of the basket. He then took a card from his pocket-book and attached it with a piece of white ribbon to the handle. It bore the inscription at the back:—

"MISS LUCILLE DE GRECY,

"With tender enquiries."

I carelessly turned the pasteboard over and read:

"SIR PERCY SPALDING,

"2008 Piccadilly, W."

"Sir Percy Spalding!" I ejaculated.

"What, do *you* know him?" asked Anthony sharply.

"No," I responded. "I've seen him. That's all."

By this time we were driving along again. Presently the cab stopped in quite a countrified lane at a pretty house, with a long garden in front of it. Anthony rang the bell and delivered the basket to a trim servant-maid, and hurried back into the cab. "Drive to Nibbler's as quick as you can," he called out to the driver. "I'm afraid there'll be some stupid row about that fruit," he added thoughtfully, "but no matter, I can't be blamed."

As we drove along I tried to find out what was Anthony's business with Sir Percy, but I soon discovered that I was pumping a dry well. I then asked him if he had heard any news of Lord Clacton since Tabby's tap on that unworthy nobleman's head.

"Oh! haven't you seen the *Morning Post* to-day?" he said. "Read that," and he handed me a newspaper cutting. It ran as follows:—

"We regret to learn that Lord Clacton met with a somewhat severe accident on Saturday night. It appears that after the family had gone to rest, his lordship had occasion to visit the library for the purpose of getting a book. The gas had been turned out, but unfortunately the footman, who extinguished the jets of the large gaselier which ascends and descends, had omitted to raise the ponderous ormolu construction to the ceiling again. In the feeble light Lord Clacton did not perceive this, and his head came into violent collision with the gaselier. A very severe abrasion of the skin was caused, and a swelling of the scalp. Happily, the brain-pan was not affected, but Sir William Pestle and Dr Thoroughpin have ordered the illustrious patient complete rest, and he left London, accompanied by Lady Clacton, on Sunday evening for Schlangenbad."

"Who's your friend, Captain Bolitho?" I asked.

"He has retired on half-pay," answered Anthony, "from the 25th Diddlesex Regiment, better known as the Queen's Bench Fallbacks. At present he is in command of a little corps of his own raising, known as the Finsbury Freebooters, a useful lot, well drilled, but lacking somewhat in conscientious scruples."

"Bar chaff," I said. "What do they do?"

"Everybody they can, young feller," replied Anthony placidly.

"Then how can they be useful?" I retorted.

"Let me give you an example. Supposing you had the misfortune to be relieved of your watch or your pin, say, at a race-course, what would you do?"

"Go to the police, of course," I answered promptly.

Anthony gave me a pitying smile, and observed: "Then you'd never see your property again. This is what I'd do. I send for Captain Bolitho, state the case to him, and ask his advice. He'd say, 'What's there to cut up?' I'd tell him a fiver, a tenner, or a pony, as the case might be. If he said 'Done!' I know that I should get mine own again. Of course hitches arise sometimes. For instance, last year a friend of mine went to the Derby, and left his gold watch and chain on the course. Fancy going to the Derby with a gold watch and chain! However, he did, and mourned the loss of his trinkets because the ticker was a presentation one, inscribed with all sorts of flummery. He came to me about it. I asked him to write out a full description of the watch, fixed the reward for its recovery, and sent for Captain Bolitho. 'Well,' said the Captain, 'if the works are still going you shall have it back in

less than twenty-four hours.' But at the end of that period, the Captain came to me looking very dejected. 'I can't get any news of that ticker. Can't understand it anyhow. Are you sure your friend lost it at Epsom?' 'Certain,' I replied; 'but, however, I'll look him up and ask him again.' I did so. 'Of course; it was stolen in Barnard's Stand.' I repeated the information to Bolitho. I shan't easily forget his disgusted look. 'In Barnard's Stand!' he said, 'in Barnard's Stand! Why, damme, Mr Fuller, I thought you said your pal was a gentleman!' But here we are at Nipper's."

I had been so engrossed in listening to Anthony's conversation that I did not perceive that we were back in the West End, and had stopped before a brightly painted house in a side street off Piccadilly. It was evidently a tavern of some kind, though there was no sign over the door, only this laconic inscription stretched right across the front of the house in great gilt letters, "Nipper's." We passed through a bar, and entered a large room with a low ceiling begrimed with smoke. Round this apartment were numbers of mahogany boxes, and the brick floor was heavily sanded. Anthony entered one of the boxes, and rapped three times on the table with his stick. An old waiter, with a fat face and stomach to match, appeared.

"I'm hungry, young feller. Are you?" asked Anthony.

I replied that I decidedly was, but secretly wondered that my companion could be, after his luncheon at the Carlton, to say nothing of the grapes.

"Charles," said Anthony to the fat waiter, "two fried soles, four chump chops *hot, and hot*, French

THE SCARLET CITY

beans, potatoes, bottle of '48. Quick's the word, and sharp's the appetite."

"Yessir," said Charles, as he waddled off to a pipe fixed by the old-fashioned fireplace, and shouted some instructions to the regions below.

"We shall just have time to get through* our cagmag before the fun begins."

"What fun?" I enquired.

"Just this. The Honourable Willoughby Footit, late of the Guards, has backed himself for a monkey to walk from here to the Star and Garter, Richmond, and back, in six hours. He's to start at five o'clock, in full evening dress, dancing-pumps included, and a gibus hat on his head. He's made the bet with Lord Donachie, of the Blues, and I shouldn't wonder if he pulled it off. A rare sportsman is Willoughby Footit. It was only this spring that he made a wager he'd bring off a sparring match in his mother's drawing-room at Toplady House, Grosvenor Square. The family were out of town, but the family mansion was in charge of a stubborn old butler, and an equally perverse housekeeper, who kept guard over the premises like terriers at a rat-hole, having got wind of the bet from Lord Snuffleton's rascal. Well, what does Footit do? He gets two of his pals to dress up like bobbies, and one wet evening after dark, they came 'rat-a-tat-tat' at the front door. The old butler opened it. 'We've come,' said one of the sham policemen, 'to ask you and Mrs Megrin'—that was the housekeeper's name—to be good enough to go at once to Scotland Yard, as it is expected that this house is to be broken into this very night, and the Chief Commissioner suspects two of the servants who were discharged last month. My friend

here will look after the premises, while I'll escort you to the Chief Commissioner.' Off go the old couple in a four-wheeler, and are taken off to some rooms near Chelsea Barracks, where they are told the Chief Commissioner is out, but will be back soon. A good supper is placed before them, and they are made as happy as possible. Meanwhile, the door is thrown open by the sham policeman left in charge, a dozen chaps who'd been waiting round the corner make their appearance, the furniture is cleared aside in the drawing-room, a roped ring set up, and the costly pile carpet covered with the best sawdust procurable. By ten o'clock there's as pretty a place for a spar ready as you'd wish to see. Eleven o'clock is the time fixed for the scrap between Tom Groggins of Battersea, and the "Bordeaux Pigeon" of Wapping, and by half-past ten quite a number of cabs and carriages are driving up to Toplady House, not a few with members of the fair sex inside. Now, as ill luck would have it, Willoughby Footit didn't know that his mother, the Countess of Toplady, had come up to town suddenly, and was staying at her daughter's, in Upper Grosvenor Street, for the night. It so happened that her ladyship, coming back from the theatre, passed her own threshold, and to her great surprise perceived that her drawing-room was lighted up, and that a crowd of loafers were hanging about her steps. The Countess at once resolved that some of her rascally menials had taken advantage of her absence to give a party. So, being a very determined lady, she resolved to give them an unpleasant surprise. Telling the coachman to wait at the corner, she crept along the pavement, let herself into the house with a latchkey and ascended to the drawing-room,

whence clapping of hands and shouts—for it was the end of a round—proceeded. She opened the door and looked in, and fell back in very high-toned hysterics. I leave you to imagine the scene and the stampede which followed the Countess's entrance. Footit sent a cab off immediately for the kidnapped butler and house-keeper, and having unearthed a kitchen-maid, told her to attend to his mother, while he followed his guests. It was three months before Lady Toplady would see him again, but they're reconciled now. I don't know what she'll say to this match, though, if she hears of it."

While Anthony was talking, he was also pitching into the excellent fare, and so, indeed, was I. The fish and chops were first-rate, and the port undeniable. Anthony was pulling at a cigar, and I mouth-ing a cigarette when the hero of the hour arrived, followed by a cohort of admirers. He was a tall, dark young fellow, in a drab overcoat, which he threw off and revealed himself in full evening dress. He proceeded to take off his boots, and put on a pair of old dancing pumps.

"Now, look here, Don," he said to a freckled-faced, red-headed youth, "remember this. There's nothing in the articles of agreement to prevent my changing my shoes as often as I like. These won't last to Richmond and back."

"All right, old chap," said Donachie, "I'm agree-able to anything."

"You don't object to a watering-cart, if necessary?" asked Footit.

"Not a bit of it!" cried Donachie. "All I bar, is running or holding on to traps going along the road."

"Well, I've got five minutes," observed Footit;

"give me an egg beaten up with a glass of sherry. Now, will any one lay me two to one in tenners or ponies that I don't do the job, with a quarter of an hour to spare?"

"Yes, I will," I said boldly. Why I spoke, I know not, but the spirit moved me. Every one eyed me suspiciously. "I'll lay you two ponies to one."

"Done!" cried Footit, producing a little note-book. "Name?"

"Franklyn," I replied.

"Club?"

"I haven't got any," I said diffidently.

"Oh! oh! oh!" murmured the bystanders.

"Stake, then?" asked Footit.

I was nonplussed. I could not bring that brown paper package out of my inner pocket. Dear old Anthony came to my rescue.

"I'll be answerable, Mr Footit," he cried.

"Ah! Mr Fuller, how d'ye do," said Footit affably.

"Right! it's a bet."

"Time!" said a big man with a watch. "Off you go!"

"Come on! young feller," said Anthony, as Footit strode away from the door of Nipper's, followed by a pushing, shouting rabble into Piccadilly, and a throng of traps of all sorts. "Come on! I've got a dog-cart outside." Never shall I forget Footit's progress down Piccadilly, his coat-tails flying out behind him, and his gibus hat perched at the back of his head. Cheers, bo-o-ohing, and laughter saluted him on every side, but evidently some one was clearing the road ahead, for, with the true love of sport which distinguishes English folk of all classes,

the vehicles of all sorts—omnibuses, waggons, barouches, victorias, and cabs—drew aside, and gave him as clear a way as if he had been engineered by a force of policemen. Through Kensington, Hammersmith, Turnham Green, Chiswick, and Kew, Footit kept on with even stride, taking a piece of lemon now and again from a man, who rode beside him on a roan cob. He eased off a bit going up the mountainous bridge at Kew, and changed his shoes on the summit, throwing his discarded pumps, the soles of which were full of holes, into the river, and then he pushed forward again with seemingly undiminished vigour. The worst thoroughfare which he had yet encountered, was narrow winding George Street, Richmond. Indeed, he had to stop altogether just before he turned the corner leading to Hill-rise, so blocked was the roadway. However, he got through eventually, but the Hill itself was a tremendous obstacle on which to finish the first half of the journey. "He'd better have taken the other road," said Tony, looking at his watch. "He's well in hand, but that alp's knocked some stuffing out of him." On arriving at the Star and Garter, Footit had his socks taken off, and his feet were bathed in salt and water, while he partook of a tumbler of sherry and egg. After a quarter of an hour's rest, he started on the return journey, having three hours and ten minutes in which to accomplish the feat. Odds of 2 to 1 on him were freely laid. All went well till we got to Kensington. Night had of course set in some time before, and the streets were ablaze with gas. Just by St Mary Abbot's Church, a small tax cart, drawn by a grey pony, charged down the road on the left. The spectators gave a shout of warning to the pedestrian,

but it was too late. The shaft of the runaway trap hit, not him, but a man walking alongside, and in falling the latter knocked over Footit, who, amid cries of dismay, rolled over in the road. He soon picked himself up. "I'm all right," he said, when he had put on his gibus hat again, and shaken the dust off. "I'll do it yet." The mob cheered him to the echo. No one seemed to care about the man who had been really injured. We could now perceive that Footit limped slightly with his left foot as he walked, but still he stuck to his work manfully. At Hyde Park corner we could see by the illuminated clock that he had just twenty-three minutes wherein to reach Nipper's.

"You've won your bet," whispered Anthony.

"Blow my bet!" I said, "I want to see him win *his*."

Footit now attempted to put on a spurt. This was literally rather a lame effort, but still he travelled more quickly. It was five minutes to eleven, as he passed St James's Church. Nipper's was almost in sight when the commotion, always excited by the capture of a drunken man, caused another delay. The excitement among those who had followed the tramp, was intense. Footit reeled into Nipper's just before the clock struck the hour. "Well done!" said the impassive man with the watch. "You've won by a minute and thirty-two seconds." Of course there was a mighty cheer repeated again and again.

"Would you mind cutting my left sock off?" asked Footit quietly. The sock was full of coagulated blood. "That poor fellow's boot landed on my toes," observed Footit in explanation. "Don, find out his

address, like a good chap, and send him a tenner." And then turning to me, he said: "Mr Franklyn, I owe you a pony."

"And I owe him a sound thrashing," said a familiar voice. It was that of the Wicked Uncle.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

*WE GO TO
MARGATE*

UNCLE PHILIP 'was not in the sweetest of tempers when he confronted Anthony Fuller and myself. It seems that he had seen us in the dog-cart when passing Devonshire House, and followed us in a hansom to Nipper's.

"Now, what new devilry is this?" he cried angrily, when we were in the street. "Your Uncle Theobald has cut his lucky, as savage as a bear with a wasp in his ear, and our conversation wasn't all sugar and spice, I can tell you. What's the meaning of your bolting?"

"I'll explain matters," said Anthony, before I could speak. "It's all my fault."

Then he told the story of Evans's. Before he got very far in it, the Wicked Uncle was grinning like a Cheshire cat, and he laughed so heartily and loudly, that the passers-by the steps of the tavern before which we were standing, stared at him with astonishment.

"By Aaron's rod! that's good!" he cried; "the stingy old psalm-singer was done out of his supper! Excellent! he ought to know better than to frequent such places. One thing's certain, the Rectory's no port for you now, Jack. Come round to the Club,

both of you, and we'll chin-chin over what's to be done."

As we were settling ourselves, with drinks and tobacco, in a quiet corner of the smoking-room, a gentleman with a very shiny and very curly hat, and black whiskers also very shiny and very curly, waved a yellow and red bandana to Uncle Philip by way of salutation, but he did not move from the big arm-chair in which he had ensconced himself, with his highly varnished boots on another. On perceiving Anthony he called out: "Hullo, Mr Fuller, how are you? Things going well on Tom Tiddler's ground? Any pickings lying about?"

"No, my lord," said Anthony, "there are too many early birds about."

"I only wish I could get hold of a fat juicy worm," cried the Shiny Man, "I'd bolt it like a prairie oyster. Talking of prairie oysters, Franklyn, you know what they are, eggs, pepper, and Worcester sauce. That mean man, Billy Grainger, played me a dirty trick the other day. I met him in Piccadilly, and being rather stony, asked him to stand me a gargle. He didn't half like it, but I towed him into Jimmy's, when he said rather sulkily: 'What are you going to have?' 'A prairie oyster,' I said. 'Damme!' he said, 'I asked you to have a drink, not to luncheon.' And with that he bolted off, leaving me fumbling with a 'godless' florin, which I keep for luck. However, happily, Tommy Moncroft rolled in and relieved the garrison. Ta! Ta!" And the Shiny Man lazily loafed out of the room.

"Oh! you know the Prowler, do you?" said the Wicked Uncle to Anthony.

"Rather," he answered with one of his eye-grins.

"It was only 'on Thursday last that he asked me to let him have a fiver till his Irish rents came in. I told him I couldn't spare it, as my washing-bill was so heavy during the warm weather. Then he began Dutch auctioneering, and at last he let me off with a half-a-thick 'un. You wouldn't think he was a marquis, would you?"

"A marquis!" I cried.

"None other," said the Wicked Uncle, "than the Most Honourable the Marquis of Kilkenny. Poor old Prowler! He's not a bad sort, and when he's got any yellow boys he sets them spinning, I can tell you."

"Did you ever hear about Lord Kilkenny and the coals?" asked Anthony.

"No, let's have the yarn by all means," said the Wicked Uncle.

"Well," said Anthony, "last October the Prowler was living in a furnished house in Queen Street, Mayfair. I don't know how he got hold of it, but there he was, house of course in a state of siege, the door always on the chain, and his man Tibbetts doing sentry duty. Well, one morning four great coal waggons stopped opposite the door, and after a short parley with Tibbetts, the men began emptying the sacks down the shoot in the pavement, Lord Kilkenny watching them from behind the dining-room curtains, and wondering what the deuce the game was. Tibbetts couldn't tell him. All the coalmen knew was that they had to deliver ten tons. 'Ten tons,' cried the Prowler very joyfully. 'That'll pull us nicely through the winter; we shan't have to burn any more chairs.' By-and-bye, however, the coal-carts came back, and the coal-heavers interviewed

Tibbetts, who presently told his master—"There's been a mistake, the coals have been delivered at the wrong house, and the men want to go down to the cellar and take them away." "That be hanged!" said the noble Kilkenny. "You tell 'em to take their coals out by the same entrance they put 'em in at." The men begged, and implored, and cursed, and swore, but the Prowler was as hard as a stale roll, and stuck to the black diamonds."

"Very good," said the Wicked Uncle approvingly, "but I'll cap it. About four years ago the Prowler had fixed himself up at a private hotel, not a hundred miles from this Club. Finding the grub good, and the landlord confiding, the Prowler resolved to keep his hammock slung there as long as possible. When he'd run up a bill as long as a ship's cable, the landlord suddenly died. This alarmed his lordship, who recollected that on such occasions some particularly greedy sharks, called executors, make themselves very nasty with debtors. However, he discovered that the deceased had left everything to his widow, so hearing that she was very much upset, and had taken to her bed, he wrote her a note, condoling with her sorrow, and offering to look after all the funeral arrangements. The widow, highly flattered by the marquis's condescension, wrote back how deeply grateful she was for his lordship's kindness, and to cut the cackle short, she accepted his truly Christian offer, the more so, as her doctor absolutely forbade her to leave her room, and attend her poor dear husband's funeral. I needn't tell you that the Prowler was not one to neglect such an opportunity. I don't know what the undertaker's bill totted up to, but the noble marquis about that time displayed several stylish frock-coats, and hats,

and many pairs of new gloves. It was arranged that the Prowler should follow the body in a brougham by himself, none of the landlord's relations being fit company for a real live lord. Now the Prowler spent the night before the funeral at the Tiptoff Club, a place known to you both, and being in funds he got as tight as a blue jacket who's paid off after a three years' cruise on the West Coast. The consequence was that at the time when he should have been following in the wake of the coffin, the Prowler was snoring on one of the Club sofas, for no one could either awake or move him. About eleven o'clock he roused himself, and having shaken the gum out of his eyes, suddenly remembered the function, which he had to attend. He rushed back to the hotel, explained that he had been discussing the Eastern Question all night with Mr Gladstone, breakfasted on B. and S., and having donned the customary sables, told the driver of the brougham, which was waiting at the door, to go like hell to Kensal Green. The black crock between the shafts, accustomed to walking exercise, was nearly white with foam when the Prowler tumbled out of the carriage. At the gate of the cemetery he asked an official where the landlord was to be earthed up. The man having consulted his grave-tally, showed him how to reach the spot, and away rushed the Prowler in pursuit of the funeral procession. At last he came up with a long string of mourners, in the part of the cemetery indicated, and putting on his best woebegone look, took up his place just behind the coffin and joined in the melancholy march. I don't suppose the Prowler paid much attention to the service, or he'd have found out that his bearings were not altogether correct. However,

THE SCARLET CITY

when the ceremony was over, he lingered by the side of the grave, to avoid the other mourners, and said to the men who were filling it up; 'Ah! poor fellow, he was a very great pal of mine!'

"The men stared at him, and at last one of them said: 'I expects there's been some mistake, sir.' 'Mistake!' cried the Prowler. 'What do you mean? Isn't this the grave of my dear friend, Mr William Thrush?' 'Gawd bless ye no, sir,' said the man, 'that little show was over 'arf an hour afore you comed. This 'ere was a laidy.' The Prowler fled back with great misgivings in his heart. He was right in his surmises. He hadn't been in the hotel ten minutes before he was handed a letter from the bereaved proprietress, in which she said that she was heart-broken at his conduct. Not only had he come back to the hotel in broad daylight, in evening dress, on such a distressful morning, but she had learnt from her sister that he had not had the decency to attend her dear late lamented's interment. Under these circumstances she would be obliged if the Marquis of Kilkenny would immediately settle his account, long overdue, and leave the hotel. 'I left the hotel,' observed the Prowler when he spun me the yarn, 'but I regret to say that the account is still overdue. It was a bad affair, because though I couldn't legally marry Mrs Thrush, I might have been invaluable to her in helping her to carry on the business.'

"And now, my hearty," said the Wicked Uncle abruptly. "We'll drop the Prowler overboard, and determine what's to be done with you—it's getting late too—I suppose you're both peckish—what say you to some grilled bones and a Welsh rarebit, and

while we're picking our bit we can lay our mines." His proposal was agreed to *nem. con.*

I noticed that the Wicked Uncle no longer seemed to fight shy of Anthony Fuller. On the contrary, he asked him for his advice on many points, and I could see that Tony was flattered by this treatment.

"Now, Mr Fuller," said Uncle Philip, "I ask you as a man of the world, what do you advise should be done with Master Jack? He can't always be running before the wind. I must fetch him up somewhere. Now I've heard to-day from my friend, Admiral Cockleton, of a capital tutor, in Germany, where his nephew picked up the lingo, when being stuffed for a Foreign Office examination. The tutor is a major in the army, and Cockleton says is a very good sort, and I believe that Bingenstadt, the capital of the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Bingenstadt, is a very healthy if not a very lively town. Major Pickelstein, that's his name, only takes a limited number of pupils, and of course he mayn't have a vacancy, but I've written to him this very afternoon, and am pretty certain that if he can manage it he will, because Jack's grandfather, at one period of his celebrated career, was British Minister at Bingenstadt, and on that account Jack would be well received in polite society there."

"I'm sorry to say, captain," said Anthony, "that my acquaintance with polite society is a very limited quantity but I've no doubt it's very agreeable to those who are polite enough to be in it. I suppose that Jack having been born an ambassador, is bound to carry out the family programme, and to do so, of course, he must be properly trained. The stables to which you refer appear to be quietly situated, with few touts about, and plenty of exercise ground."

I was exceedingly annoyed at hearing Anthony Fuller talk in this way, because I had not the slightest desire to go to Bingenstadt, and already hated the name of Pickelstein.

"I'm afraid, captain," Anthony went on "that you think I'm a bit of a rapsallion, but I assure you I can be as serious as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Now while you're waiting for this major's answer, I'm going to ask you to let me take Jack to Margate for a fortnight. The blow will do him good, and, if he gets into any trouble, you can tar and feather me. Besides, I shall be combining business with pleasure. Never mind how. By the way, captain, I think you know a lady called Mrs Sharraton—Minnie Sharraton?"

"And what if I do, sir," exclaimed the Wicked Uncle angrily.

"Only," said Anthony, "I think you're too old a bird to be caught with salt on your tail."

"I don't understand you," retorted the Wicked Uncle.

"Very likely," said Anthony, "but—I speak seriously—beware of Flaherty. Let's change the subject. Do you approve of the Margate expedition, captain?"

"I do, and I don't," answered the Wicked Uncle.

"Then you *do*," said Anthony, with one of his queer twinkles.

"All right," said Uncle Philip, "but remember, Mr Fuller, that I shall hold you responsible for my nephew's conduct."

"I accept my trust," replied Anthony, with a gravity which made me smile.

Then we parted; Anthony no doubt made his way

to Mrs Bottlestrap's hostelry. I had my "shake-down" of the previous night at the Wicked Uncle's rooms.

"Good-night, Jack," said Uncle Philip as he retired to his couch, "remember I am going to trust you with Fuller at Margate, in the hope that there will be no bar across the harbour, when I send you, as I trust I shall, to Major Pickelstein! God love me," I heard him murmur as he moved to his sleeping den, "how I must love my family!"

Dear Wicked Uncle! Kindest of souls, ever generous, and ever ready to crush the natural selfishness of his disposition. Uncle Philip was one of those men, who would spend a hundred pounds in the execution of what he considered to be his duty, but, on the other hand, would begrudge five shillings in administering relief to such a popular institution as a hospital. "No, by Aaron's rod!" he would exclaim, when pressed for a subscription. "I can't stand cadging. All these institutions are thrust down our throats, like harpoons into a whale's back. What for? To benefit the poor? Not a bit of it. To keep the surgeons, nurses, and bottlewashers, who muster thick as cockroaches in every hospital in the kingdom. Give me an honest chemist, with two-pennyworth of Epsom salts, a dab of zinc ointment, and a rhubarb pill, and the despised bone-setter with his anatomical knowledge. Perish all so-called doctors! Hospitals may be foundered, so far as I am concerned."

I do not agree or disagree with the Wicked Uncle's views. I merely record them.

I slept at the uncle's flat, if so it could be termed, and the next morning, between nine and ten, Anthony

Fuller appeared upon the scene. He wore a yachting suit and a peaked cap. Indeed he looked, said the Wicked Uncle, like the steward of a P. & O. steamer—a compliment which Anthony did not wholly appreciate. Uncle Philip wished to give me some money “to go on with,” but remembering my winnings, I would not take a farthing—a refusal so astonishing to the uncle (who I then learnt for the first time, did not know of my success at the Tiptoff tables) that he exclaimed: “You must have found the gold tap somewhere. Let me have a drain off of it when you can.”

“Then, captain,” said Anthony Fuller, “you’ll have to wait till Jack’s an ambassador to the court of the Queen of Sheba.”

“The Queen of Sheba be d——d!” cried the Wicked Uncle. “Let him play the part of that ancient Lothario, King Solomon, and make *her* come to *him*. Anthony Fuller,” he added, “I want a word in your ear.”

The pair drew aside. I made no attempt to listen to their conversation, but I could not help hearing the Wicked Uncle exclaim excitedly, “Minnie Sharraton? if it’s true, I’ll break his neck!” Then, turning to me, he said, “Now, Jack, I’ll try and make plain sailing for you always, but, by Aaron’s rod! it strikes me that you’ll get shoaled sooner or later. Always reef your canvas in a gale, those are my unsealed orders.”

Immediately afterwards Anthony and I were on our way to Victoria Station, where we caught the train to Margate by what Tony termed “the epidermis of our molars.” I noticed that my comrade was not in his usual spirits. He pretended to read the

newspaper, pulled out a note-book in which he pencilled nothing, drew the windows up and down (we had the compartment to ourselves), and seemed generally ill at ease. At last I ventured to ask the reason of his strange behaviour. "Well, young feller," he replied, with an evident effort to be himself, "the fact of the matter is this, between ourselves, you know that I make myself useful to Sir Percy Spalding. I do it because it pays me. Not his wretched two pounds a-week, but the information which he gets and I profit by. You must know that Sir P. S., despite his fine airs and his great importance, is nothing more or less than a money-lender's tout and a commission-agent for backing horses. Well, the other day he was summoned to attend an inquest at Cardiff, on the body of one of his friends—one of the sort of friends he has. Sir Percy had financed him quite in the gentleman-like style, but the Welshman, finding himself on the brink of ruin, settled everything and everybody, including himself, by committing suicide. I make no doubt but that you'll set him down as a coward for so doing. I, on the other hand, esteem him as a brave man. Remember this, Jack, poltroons never do away with themselves. They never face the pistol or the razor. No, a determined suicide is certainly a brave man. I put down Captain Apgriffiths as a *felo de se* hero, for he not only blew out his brains, but left a letter behind him, begging the jury not to ascribe his death to temporary insanity, because, as he wrote, 'I was never more sane in my life than in resolving to put an end to a life, useless not only to myself, but absolutely so to those with whom I come in contact.' The mayor's sudden removal made

Sir Percy wince, not because he had any tears to spare, but by reason of the fact that Apgriffiths owed him a good bit of money. On going away, my employer gave me these directions: 'Forward no letters; those marked "private" open and reserve for my inspection, begging epistles, duns, and the rest of that sort put into the waste-paper basket.' Sir Percy hadn't been gone twenty-four hours, when up comes a letter marked 'private,' with the Dorchester post-mark on it. Five fivers fell out of the envelope, and the writer, one Thomas Dibbling, begged Sir Percy to put them on a certain horse for a certain race. I'm not going to give away particulars. The writer stated that he sent the notes, because he feared Sir Percy might not be able to negotiate in time a country cheque.

"The race was to be run on the very day on which the letter arrived. I thought a bit, and determined to be the book-maker, having had a strong tip about another quadruped before the letter arrived. But I thought I must make things absolutely safe. Accordingly, I waited till the wire announcing the result came up. Mr Thomas Dibbling's fancy was not even placed. I immediately went to a publican, whom I knew, and said: 'You make a book. I want you to put down a bet to me on a race that's over.' The licensed victualler stared at me until I had explained the situation. I agreed to give him two sovereigns on condition that he booked the bet and kept his tongue quiet. Of course he was only too glad to do so. I pocketed with a calm conscience Dibbling's fivers. Only yesterday Sir Percy returned from his expedition, and went through his correspondence. When he got to Dibbling's letter he halted on his

mission of destroying all missives. 'Hum! Hum! Fuller,' he explained. 'This is important. What have you done with the notes?' 'I put them on Seagreen, the horse named,' I answered boldly. 'But Tops and Bottoms won,' he said with a sardonic smile. 'I know that well enough,' I replied, 'but I thought that I ought to carry out Mr Dibbling's instructions.' The worthy baronet eyed me with a dubious air. 'Anthony Fuller,' he said, 'I'm afraid that you are not speaking the truth.' 'Sir Percy,' I replied with the milk of human kindness trickling out of the corners of my mouth, 'you do me grievous wrong. If you doubt my word, go and ask Toddlekin, the book-maker, and look at his entries.' 'Fuller,' said Sir Percy angrily, 'you can't fool me. I'm sure you never planked the cash. However, I'll not be hard on you—give me half!' 'Sir Percy Spalding, Baronet, Deputy-Lieutenant, and Justice of the Peace,' I answered, 'by doubting my word you cast an ineffaceable stigma upon my yet-unmarried wife and still unborn children.' 'A truce to your pleasantries,' observed Sir Percy dryly. 'Shall we make it a tenner.' I then waxed wroth and exclaimed, 'Not an oat, nor the husk of an oat. I'm not here, Sir Percy Spalding, Bart., etcetera, etcetera, to play the old-fashioned game of coddam. You have doubted my word. The word of an English gentleman is never doubted. I shake the dust of my boots, and refuse to have any connection with you henceforth for ever and a day of reckoning.' Whereupon I turned upon my heel and left him chewing the cud of bitterness. As I got to the door of his chambers he called after me, 'I'll take a fiver, Anthony, and cry quits.' I answered him

not a word. I daresay, Jack, that you 'will think me a singular blackguard, but I did what I could for myself under the circumstances, and perhaps when the Day of Judgment arrives, I shall not be condemned to the grill on the unsupported evidence of Sir Percy Spalding. Do you think I was wrong, Jack?"

"I'm blessed if I know, Tony," I replied. "You're four years older than I am."

"Say forty rather," chuckled Anthony, "but look here, young feller, remember this, I always play fair when I'm fairly dealt with, but young as I am, God help the man or woman who tries any hanky-panky with Anthony Fuller!"

He puffed at a big regalia and relapsed into silence. I broke it.

"I say, Tony," I said; "I want to ask you two questions."

"Send them to the post," he answered, "and I'll see they're weighed in all right after the race."

"Well, in the first place," I said, "what am I going to do with that money which I won at the Tiptoff Club? It's like a milestone round my neck."

Anthony smiled. "You won't mind those milestones presently," he remarked, "but as you ask, I'll tell you what to do with the brass. Let me put it into the bank for you. You're under age, but I'll guarantee you shan't suffer on that account. Will you trust me?"

"Trust you!" I cried; "I'd trust you with anything." Nevertheless, I never did trust him with the money. I wish I had. But destiny was against me—as will be seen later on.

"Thanks, old man," he said warmly; "some people

might say different. Now, what's your second enquiry?"

"You told the Wicked Uncle," I replied, "that you meant to combine business with pleasure at Margate. What did you mean? Has it anything to do with me?"

"Directly," he answered, "nothing whatever, but I shall need your assistance. I'm not quite sure of the ropes yet, but I'll handle them, I hope, to your liking and to mine."

Five minutes later, the train ran into Margate Station. A man in nautical garb on the platform, eagerly scanned those passengers who descended. Somewhat diffidently he approached Anthony and asked, "Mr Fuller, sir?" "The very same," replied Anthony. The Nautical Man handed him a note. Anthony tore it open, read it with evident interest, and said: "Tell Mr Derryboyd I'll be on board this evening for dinner, if he'll kindly send the launch for us to the jetty at seven."

The Nautical Man touched his cap and disappeared, as we climbed into one of those ramshackle vehicles, which appear to have been specially designed for use in the Isle of Thanet.

CHAPTER

THE YACHT

FOURTEENTH

"SEVEN SISTERS"

ANTHONY took me to a hotel near the Jetty, where, as usual, he was on the best of terms with the ruling deities, to whom he explained that though he had no intention of taking up his quarters there, he would be obliged by their looking after our trunks. This was readily agreed to by the landlady, the more so, as Anthony ordered a capital lunch with a bottle of champagne. "Now, Jack," said Tony, when we had finished our meal and had lighted our cigarettes; "you heard me tell your uncle that I was going to Margate on business and pleasure mixed. Well, that's strictly true, and I'll tell you why. There's a big steam yacht lying off here, called *The Seven Sisters*. She belongs to a very rich American, named Derryboyd, who has one peculiarity, and that is he won't go to sea. *The Seven Sisters* for three years has never done any cruising; she lies at Margate all through the summer, and at Harwich all through the winter. Now Mr Derryboyd's relations and friends on the other side of the herring-pond are very anxious that he should return to them, but Mr Derryboyd himself prefers the salubrious waters of the English Channel. He has, in fact, from what I can gather, got a beam

started in his top storey. However, he is now in want of a companion-secretary. I heard of the situation being vacant, applied for it, and have been appointed. The terms are splendid, but there is attached to the office a condition of which of course Mr Derryboyd knows nothing, and that is, that I am to do all I can in my power to up with the anchor and take Mr Derryboyd across the Atlantic to New York, where no doubt his sorrowing family will receive him with open arms. I don't much like this part of the business, but I'm promised £2000 if I get it through, and am assured that the move is really for Mr Derryboyd's benefit. As to you, I've got Mr Derryboyd's permission to take you on board, and I shall take it as a particular favour if you'll keep your eyes open and your mouth shut. Are you game?"

Of course I was game. Had Anthony Fuller suggested a voyage to Otaheite in a bathing-machine, I should have said "Yes," with the greatest alacrity.

"We'll only take our bags on board," said Anthony. "It is not of any use being loaded up with a lot of heavy boxes."

In as much as we only possessed a portmanteau apiece, Anthony put the case rather strongly.

Punctually at seven o'clock we found a smart white steam launch waiting for us at the end of the jett, and immediately afterwards we were speeding over the water towards a large steam yacht, also painted white.

"I'm not quite certain how this business is going to turn out. I've been out of luck since those con-founded grapes began my disagreement with my tame baronet," observed Anthony.

THE SCARLET CITY

"What happened?" I asked.

Oh! Sir Percy went all smiles to call upon the fair Lucille, and had the basket and its contents thrown in his face. Of course I knew nothing about it, and suggested that the servants had changed the fruit. By Jupiter! *The Seven Sisters* is a very fine-looking craft! I'd back her against a Rosherville steamer any day," he exclaimed, as we went alongside the yacht. At the gangway we were greeted by a stout red-whiskered man, who lifted his cap very politely, and begged us to go down to the saloon where Mr Derryboyd would join us. This individual introduced himself as the captain, and we found out later on that his name was Jabez Lunker. I have never—not even in these later days of marine magnificence—seen any vessel so superbly appointed as *The Seven Sisters*. The saloon was painted cream and gold, with exquisite panels, the work I afterwards learnt of Bougereau, depicting lovely ladies without any superfluity of raiment. The fittings instead of being brass were either silver or electro-plate. There was a grand piano, flanked by a long book-case filled with daintily-bound volumes, and silver baskets filled with orchids hung from the ceiling. Even the imperturbable Anthony was surprised. "This looks A1 at Lloyd's," he whispered to me. "I wonder what the noble owner's like." The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a man, clad from head to foot in pink silk, entered the saloon. He was dark complexioned, with a Vandyke beard, an abundance of curly locks, and very small hands and feet.

"Welcome on board of *The Seven Sisters*, gentlemen," he cried in mellifluous tones, with a slight American twang, at the same time extending the

right hand of fellowship to both of us. "What do you think of my little cockleshell?"

"Splendid!" said Anthony enthusiastically.

"Come and run her over," said Mr Derryboyd, for it was that important personage. "I'm passionately fond of yachting; a life on the ocean wave, and all that sort of thing is my craze. I daresay that some folk set me down as a crank, but every one to his own taste, say I. Follow me."

He showed us all over the vessel, and from stem to stern she was as lavishly decorated and adorned as in the saloon. Even the quarters of the men in the forecabin were fitted up regardless of expense.

"I like to make my boys comfortable," observed Mr Derryboyd. "I treat them well, and they serve me like Carolina niggers. All picked men too, and if necessary would fight like game-cocks in my interest."

Certainly I never saw finer tars than those forming the crew of the yacht. I believe that every one of them had been in the Royal Navy; indeed there was a man-of-war's discipline on board of *The Seven Sisters*, and the bugle sounded as regularly as it would have, had Mr Derryboyd been in command of one of Her Majesty's ships.

"I've given you a couple of state-rooms, next door to one another," said Mr Derryboyd complacently, when we had completed our tour. "Don't dress for dinner. If you've got anything like this," and he indicated his pink silk suit, "put it on. The third steward, Paul, has been told off to wait on you."

The cabins to which he guided us were amidships, in a passage leading to the saloon, which was aft. I need scarcely say that these rooms well merited the name of "state." Only on board of the German

Emperor's yacht *Hohenzollern* have I seen such fine sea-going apartments.

"Young feller," said Anthony, "this looks like clover on the ocean. I'm sorry I haven't any rose-coloured tights in which to dine with our host, but I think white serge will not offend his artistic eye. I don't like the look of the skipper and the crew, though I can see at a glance that Master Derryboyd is liberal with his shekels, and they're not likely to let their golden goose wing it to the land of the soaring eagle. I haven't got an easy job before me, I can see."

When we adjourned to the saloon we found Mr Derryboyd no longer in pink, but in light-blue silk attire. He said: "I hope you won't object, gentlemen, but I make it a rule to ask the skipper and first mate to join my table."

"An excellent idea, Mr Derryboyd," said Anthony; "I daresay you feel lonely sometimes."

"I'm never lonely," replied Mr Derryboyd grandiloquently, "on the ocean."

Presently dinner was served, and a very good dinner it was, the best of food and the best of drink. The skipper and the mate ate like wolves and drank like camels. They seemed on the most easy, not to say familiar, terms with their employer, nor did he resent their very free remarks.

"What say you, Mr Fuller," said Mr Derryboyd, when dessert had been put upon the table, "shall we go to sea to-morrow?"

"It ain't a bit of good proposin' that, guv'nor," put in Captain Lunker (with his mouth full of pine-apple) before Anthony could answer. "My engins ain't got them new fixins on 'em yet."

"Couldn't we sail?" asked Anthony.

"Sartinly, we might sail," replied the skipper, "if so be that you've brought a new mainsheet aboard with you; otherwise I'm afraid that the anchor 'll have to stay where it is. What do you say, Brinkley?" he added, turning to the mate, whose mouth was so full of preserved ginger that he could only nod his head like a Chinese mandarin. "However," continued Captain Lunker graciously, "far be it from me to shirk my dooty; so, with your permission, guv'nor, me and Brinkley will go ashore and see if there's such a thing as a piece of spare canvas to be found in this one-eyed town."

So saying, he gulped down a tumbler of port. Brinkley followed his example, and both the worthies rolled out of the saloon.

"Do you play cards, Mr Fuller?" asked Mr Derryboyd abruptly.

"I ~~used~~ to be a fair hand at Patience and Besique," replied Anthony gravely.

"~~Heaven~~ take such games!" cried Mr Derryboyd. "*Ecarté*, whist, poker, or cribbage. These are my sort. Take your choice."

"I think I might venture on cribbage," said Anthony. "Though I haven't played the game since my poor grandfather died."

"Right you are," cried Mr Derryboyd. "We'll adjourn to my snugery. Hoskins," he called out to the head steward. "Send Paul this way. Paul," he added, "is the man told off to look after you gentlemen. Just another glass of this '48, and then to coffee and work."

"Paul," said Mr Derryboyd, "set out the card-table in my snugery and have the coffee prepared."

I looked at Paul, started, and gave Anthony a kick

under the table. He started too, and no wonder, for the third steward was none other than the Bottle-strapian page-boy, whom Anthony had imprisoned in Napoleon's carriage on the occasion of our memorable visit to Madame Tussaud's. He made, however, no sign of recognition, but quietly bowed assent to his master's orders. We followed Mr Derryboyd to what he was pleased to call his snugery, It was a roomy cabin, panelled entirely with carved rose-wood, from which hung a number of magnificent German drinking-mugs of gold, silver, china and delft, while a stand of handsome pistols and revolvers was displayed on one side of the doorway and a rack full of swords, yataghans and daggers on the other. Mr Derryboyd and Anthony, having been supplied by Paul with drinks and cigars, immediately began their contest, which I watched intently, without in the least understanding the ethics of the game, and to-day I know no more about cribbage than I did then. There were cries from the two antagonists of, "One for his nob," "Nine's again," and similar jargon, which was about as intelligible to me, as would have been Syro-Chaldee or Chinese. But I noticed that Mr Derryboyd's fingers were extremely nimble in moving the peg with which he marked the game on the board, and that after playing a few minutes, Anthony's expression was that of considerable unrest. His speechful eyes twinkled, not with merriment, but anger. At last he said abruptly, "I think I've had enough for to-night, Mr Derryboyd."

"Very well," said our host, referring to a piece of paper. "Let me see, you owe me twelve-pounds-ten. Short accounts make long friends."

Anthony fumbled in his pockets and then said,

"I'm sorry to say, Mr Derryboyd, that I haven't sufficient cash about me to settle with."

"But I have, Tony," I cried, impetuously, and diving into my waistcoat, I produced my famous brown-paper parcel. "There," I said, handing it to him, "help yourself."

"Thanks, old chap, I will," remarked Tony as he proceeded to strip my winnings.

Mr Derryboyd looked on with a perplexed air. He could not understand the brown paper and string, but when he saw the contents of the parcel, his hand trembled so, that he upset a glass of whisky and water, which he was conveying to his lips, all over his delicate azure jacket. "Great Cæsar's ghost!" he exclaimed, when he had mopped himself up, with a blasphemous tongue accompaniment, "but that's a queer sort of purse. Where on earth did you find that?"

"Among the sharps of the Moital piano," replied Anthony—I noticed that he laid some stress on the word "sharps," as he handed his losses to his nominal employer.

"To bed! to bed, says sleepy head," chortled Mr Derryboyd merrily, as he deposited the money in a green velvet bag, which he took out of a drawer in a bureau, and carefully relocked, when he had deposited the spoil. "Hope everything will be to your liking. Paul will see to your wants. Breakfast any time. Lunch ditto. If Lunker gets that sail, we'll put to sea. You know your way. Good-night." And without further ceremony, Mr Derryboyd waved us from his snuggery like a Prime Minister dismissing two of his private secretaries. Anthony grunted a nocturnal benediction and I followed suit.

When we got to our quarters, Anthony came into my cabin, and then what was evidently very wrathful linguist-lava flowed freely from the volcano of his lips.

"The blasted thief!" he cried, "the dirty villain! I'd like to send him adrift on the North Sea, with a pack of cards and a bottle of Condyl's fluid. Do you know, Jack, that our Mr Derryboyd is nothing more nor less than a confirmed card-sharper? He cheated me with the cards, he cheated me with the marking, and he cheated me with the settling. In God's name, what does he take me for? I can't cheat, but I can spot those who do. If Bolitho had been playing with him he'd have bested him, but I was like a baby in his hands. By my sister's cat's rudder! I must take some lessons in conjuring, and give that joker as good as he gives me. What does my salary of £600 a year amount to, if I'm to hand out fifteen or twenty quids every night to that scoundrel, for you see, young feller, I daren't refuse to play with him, and I could see by the way in which he eyed your parcel that he's death on getting the lot." Here he poured forth a cascade of oaths, which seemed to relieve his feelings, for he said presently: "Well, never mind, Jack, old man, mark my words, I'll get even with Mr Derryboyd yet. I will, so help me, blue Moses!"

With this fearful vow Anthony bade me good-night, and, promising to call me early, retired to rest. The situation puzzled me extremely. I could not understand how this elegant entertainer, clad in delicate silken garments, living alone upon the boundless main, could possibly be the swindler and robber whom Anthony supposed. However, in the midst of

my reflections I fell asleep, and dreamt I was playing Mr Derryboyd at Cribbage-Cricket, a new pastime invented on this eventful night by Madam Nightmare, and never since perfected. I only remember that the Cribbage-board was the size of Lords, and that stumps were used for pegging the game.

The next morning about seven o'clock I was aroused by Anthony.

"Tumble out, young feller, let's go on deck and be sluiced," he cried.

I hopped out of my bunk, and followed him up the companion. Captain Lunker, with his gills redder than ever, was looking on, while the men were holy-stoning the planks. He greeted us both most affably, and asked if he could do anything for us.

"If," said Anthony, "you would allow two of your men to give us a dose of the hose, I should be very grateful to you, captain."

"Certainly," replied Captain Lunker. "Here Jobson and Smith, attend to these two gentlemen."

In a very few seconds, Anthony and I had joined the buffs, and were being played upon by the vigorous stream, which shot from the pipes. I am sure that there is no such ablutionary sensation as this in the world. Douche, shower, Niagara baths are nowhere, when compared to the sensation evoked by the hose and sea-water. The operation takes away your breath, but when it is over you would not exchange places with the Czar. While we were rubbing ourselves down after the bath, Captain Lunker observed to Anthony, "I suppose, sir, you're another of 'em."

"Another of 'em!" cried Anthony, very nettled; "what the deuce do you mean?"

"No offence, sir," said the captain, "but, Lor' bless

me, this game's been spinning ever since I took command of this here yacht."

"What game?" asked Anthony angrily, as he scrambled into his pyjamas.

"The game of NO GO," replied the skipper, with a saucy leer. "I knows precisely why you've come aboard, and so does my guv'nor. It ain't no use, sir, believe me. No use whatever!" He spoke quietly and earnestly despite his look.

"Why I came on board," replied Anthony hotly, "is no business of yours. Of course, Mr Derryboyd is well aware why his London agent engaged me. That's enough on that point."

"Very good, sir," said Captain Lunker. "No offence meant, as I've already remarked. I always play the strict game myself, and expect others to do the same."

"Quite so," replied Anthony, in a milder tone. "Did you get that sail last night?"

"No, sir," answered Captain Lunker, "I regret to say we did not. As I remarked last night, Margate is a one-eyed town. No enterprise here, sir; nothing but trippers and ninepenny teas. Give me Cowes or Harwich, or Southampton, or even Poole, for finding a yacht, but don't ask me to find canvas at Margate."

"Couldn't you get what you want in London?" I asked.

"In course I could, sir. In London you can procure anythink from black beetles to elephants, but Lor' bless ye! Mr Derryboyd would no more allow me, nor Brinkly, nor the sailmaker, nor the carpenter, nor yet any other of the ship's company to go to London than he'd start for Philadelphia in a dinghy. Excuse me, gentlemen, but I'm wanted forrard."

"Well," said Anthony, as we went below, "this is about the rummiest commission that I ever undertook, but I'll see it through."

Outside our cabins we found Paul, the steward, with hot water and towels.

"Hallo! my Napoleonic friend," exclaimed Anthony, "what are you doing here? You didn't appear to recognise Mr Franklyn and myself last night?"

"Oh! but indeed I did, sir," said Paul in a low voice, "but indeed I didn't dare to show it."

"Why not?" asked Anthony. "Did you think I was going to send you by Pickford's barge to Madame Tussaud's."

"Oh no, sir," said Paul, with a feeble attempt at a smile, "it wasn't that at all."

"Upon my soul!" laughed Anthony, "you seem to be a regular bundle of mystery. What's up, man; what's up?"

Paul looked round furtively, and then whispered: "Oh! Mr Fuller, do you and Mr Franklyn leave this yacht as soon as you can?" His voice trembled as he spoke.

"What do you mean?" said Anthony roughly, "why should we leave the yacht? What on earth are you driving at? Is there a conspiracy here to drive me away? Do you want to murder us?"

"Not that, not that, Mr Fuller," blubbered Paul, wringing his hands, "I can't explain—I can't explain, but do what I tell you, do what I tell you." The poor creature was evidently much upset.

Anthony was about to put a further question to him when a cheery voice behind us exclaimed, "I hope you've slept well, gentlemen, nothing like the sea for promoting somnolence." Paul fled. We

turned round and beheld Mr Derryboyd, no longer in pink or blue, but arrayed in a canary-coloured combination. "Just my luck," he went on, "Lunker can't get that sail. We shan't be able to put out into the Channel—glorious day for a trip, too."

"Send me ashore, Mr Derryboyd," said Anthony, "and I'll guarantee I'll get the canvas, even if I have to go to Gravesend or London for it."

A diabolical look came across Mr Derryboyd's countenance, and he gave a sardonic smile, which disclosed his long dog teeth.

"Mr Fuller," he snorted, "I believe that you were engaged as my secretary. When *I* want *you* to go ashore I'll send you. Meantime, I must request you not to leave the yacht without my permission. The same remark applies to Mr Franklyn. We breakfast in half-an-hour." With that he turned upon his heel. Anthony ground his teeth, and, when he was out of hearing, uttered one pious exclamation—"God give me strength to keep my temper!"

I could only second this with an equally pious "Amen."

Mr Derryboyd was extremely civil whenever we saw him during the day, but most of it he spent alone in his snugery. Captain Lunker and the first mate went ashore early, no doubt in search of the needed sail. Anthony and I passed the hours away with reading and surveying the passing craft through telescopes and field-glasses. Mr Derryboyd did not appear at luncheon, but we did full justice to the very excellent fare. Altogether, we passed a lazy but not disagreeable day. There was a fine Scandinavian breeze despite the tropical sun, and Anthony did not repeat his anathema of Mr Derryboyd. But the

conduct of Paul we could not explain, still less so when on going below to prepare for dinner Anthony handed me the following missive, which he had found on his washing-stand :—

"MR FULLER.—Sir,—I can't stand it no longer, so have offed it in the milk-boat. *O Sir, do you and Mr F. do as I advise.*—
Your humble Servant, PAUL ROGERS.

"Please tear this up."

"Well," said Anthony, "where's the fun coming in now?"

CHAPTER
FIFTEENTH

*GETTING EVEN WITH
MR DERRYBOYD*

SO things went on for nearly a fortnight. Every night Mr Derryboyd won, and Anthony lost. The crisis came at last. On a certain Friday the dinner was of the same sumptuous order as on the previous evenings, and Mr Derryboyd, who now appeared in a costume of pale green silk, was in excellent spirits.

"It may seem strange to you, Mr Fuller," he observed, "when I state that I am not a citizen of the United States."

"Your agent told me you were an American, but perhaps you've been naturalised," replied Anthony.

"Not a bit of it," said Mr Derryboyd graciously. "I had no need to be. My father came from St Louis and my mother was born at Minneapolis. Nevertheless, I am a British subject. Now read me that riddle."

"I give it up," exclaimed Anthony, "unless you were kidnapped."

Mr Derryboyd frowned. "Kidnapped," he said, "is a word to which I most distinctly object."

"I'm sure I beg your pardon," murmured Anthony with a guilty look in his tell-tale eyes; "but pray explain the conundrum."

"Well," replied Mr Derryboyd, "the fact of the

matter is, that, I was born on a Cunarder flying the Union Jack. Hence I am not only a Britisher, but from this circumstance arises no doubt my passionate adoration of the waves. Jehoshaphat! how I like to hear them playing scales on the keyboard of *The Seven Sisters*."

"You don't seem to raise your anchor much though," observed Anthony.

"It's true," retorted our host with a malevolent grin, when his fangs became, as usual, prominent, "that I'm not always battling with the breeze, but nevertheless, if necessity should arise, Mr Fuller, you'd see that shirking a cap full of wind is no part of my policy."

"In the meantime, Mr Derryboyd, you use *The Seven Sisters* as a house-boat. By the way, may I ask why you gave your boat such a peculiar name?"

"With pleasure," replied Mr Derryboyd, "it's no secret. I was in love with a whole family of young ladies, seven in all. Mary, Annette, Julia, Barbara, Lucy, Mignon, and Birdie. I couldn't wed the lot, so I didn't bestow my hand on any one of them, but kept up the sentiment in the appellation of this vessel."

"But how did it come about that she had the same name when you bought her from Lord Wrigginton?" enquired the remorseless Anthony.

Mr Derryboyd glared, and said: "Oh! ah! that's what attracted me to the boat. Appropriate title, and that sort of thing. Wrigginton wanted me to change the name, but I'd bought his visiting-book and thought it would seem mean to his friends to alter the designation."

"Do many of his friends call on you?" asked the relentless Anthony.

"Well, not now," replied Mr Derryboyd, wriggling uncomfortably in his seat, "but when first I had the yacht they were numerous, fairly numerous. But English folk are snobs, sir, dreadful snobs. They've no regard for merit, unless it's got a handle to hold by. What say you, Mr Fuller, to the snuggery, and your revenge at cribbage?"

"With all my heart," cried Anthony; "it's what I was about to propose myself."

We adjourned to the snuggery, and, as before, Mr Derryboyd scored very freely. Presently I got so sleepy, that I went out on to the deck, and soliloquised on the stars. I know nothing about astronomy, beyond being able to point out the Great Bear, the Pleiades, Venus, Mars, and other celestial celebrities, but I confess, that ever since my earliest boyhood it has been my greatest relief to look aloft on the lamps of Heaven. My religious faith was ever weak, but I will defy the most stubborn unbeliever in the Gospels to survey that great celestial map, so near and yet so far, and deny the existence of an Omnipotent Being who has fashioned not only our own little molehill, but the great glorious worlds of which we know nothing. My star-gazing was interrupted by hearing Anthony's voice exclaiming—"Mr Derryboyd, I'll pay you nothing. You're a bloody thief and scoundrel! You've cheated me, and——" Anthony's further remarks were drowned, first in the report of a firearm, and then in considerable crashing and smashing of furniture. I rushed to the snuggery, and beheld the card-table overturned, and Mr Derryboyd lying on the floor, with Anthony standing over him with a drawn

sword in his hand, a weapon, which he had evidently snatched from the arsenal by the door. The uproar had evidently attracted others besides, for I collided with Captain Lunker and his satellite Brinkley at the portal. Several of the sailors followed in their track. Mr Derryboyd lay motionless on the floor.

"How now?" shouted Captain Lunker excitedly. "What's this? attempted murder on the high seas?"

"Attempted murder it is," said Anthony, without dropping his guard. "That skunk there has been cheating me all the evening at cards. When I expostulated with him, he drew this revolver and attempted to shoot me, but I dodged my head, and snatching up this cutlass, caught him a whack with the hilt on his knowledge box. There's the whole story."

"This is very serious," exclaimed Captain Lunker. "What do you think ought to be done, Mr Brinkley?"

"Put him in irons," said Brinkley promptly.

"Put a piece of pig-iron round my neck, and chuck me overboard; that's what you mean, you murdering villain!" shouted Anthony.

"Go for him!" yelled Lunker.

"Stop!" said Anthony, quietly. "The first man who comes through that doorway I'll shoot; also the second, third, fourth, and fifth. Then my cartridges will be exhausted. But Paul Rogers will have heard the noise, and he has my instructions."

"Paul Rogers!" echoed Lunker, "so that's why he deserted?" He seemed aghast, and waved back Brinkley and the sailors. All this time I was standing beside Anthony, with a brandy bottle in my hand (I could not get to the stands of arms), and Derryboyd was lying senseless. He might be dead for aught I knew.

"Well, what is it you want?" asked the skipper, after a pause.

"I want you personally to put myself and Mr Franklyn ashore at once; that is, as soon as the steward can pack our bags."

"But if I don't!" ejaculated Lunker, defiantly; "what then?"

"Paul Rogers will know how to act," answered Anthony, "and the lot of you are liable to swing as God-forsaken pirates. I'll give you two minutes for an answer."

Captain Lunker consulted in low and hurried tones with the first mate. Then he said, "We'll take you ashore, sir. I swear this on ——"

"Bother what you swear on," said Anthony, contemptuously; "swear on this six-shooter. It's got five bullets to waste yet. Now clear, and pick up this scoundrel." He indicated the prostrate Derry-boyd. Two of the sailors lifted the yacht-owner, and as they did so he groaned heavily.

"Oh," observed Anthony, callously; "I thought I hadn't done the trick."

The whole scene passed so rapidly before me, that, even as I write, many years after the event, I wonder that I can remember so many of the incidents, the more so as my brain was in a continuous whirl. The only person who appeared to keep his presence of mind was Anthony. Until all the arrangements had been perfected for our departure from *The Seven Sisters*, he was as calm as a mill pond. Captain Lunker seemed desirous of shirking boat duty, but Anthony was inflexible. Producing the revolver, he threatened to do for the skipper if he did not fulfil his promise. I have no doubt but that Captain Lunker

would have retorted with a similar argument, but for one fact of which Anthony was ignorant at the time, namely, that Mr Derryboyd kept the key of the armoury, and forbade any of the crew, from the skipper downwards, to own lethal weapons. He was afraid of his own servants, and, as he paid Lunker handsomely to see the order obeyed, obeyed it was.

We got silently into the launch—she had her steam up, no doubt for the purpose of conveying Lunker and Brinkley ashore, and in a very short space of breathing time we were abreast of the jetty. Two policemen were airing their noses over the side. Anthony tumbled to their presence in an instant.

“Constables,” he shouted, “meet me on the steps.”

It was low water, and we could not fetch the first landing.

“Good God, Mr Fuller!” panted Captain Lunker, “what do you intend to do?”

“That’s my affair,” replied Anthony, as we ran alongside. The policemen were waiting for us as we slackened, and the coxswain gripped the piles with his boat-hook.

“Step ashore if you please, Captain Lunker,” growled Anthony, when our bags were out of the launch.

“What for?” expostulated the skipper. “I’ve seed you ashore; I ain’t interfered noways in your arrangements; and——”

“Get ashore,” said Anthony fiercely, “or I’ll tell these bobbies to board the launch.”

Captain Lunker very reluctantly obeyed. He was scarcely on the steps when Anthony said to

the policemen. "I give that man in charge, and accuse him of conspiring to murder me."

"Don't, don't, Mr Fuller," cried the luckless Captain Lunker, sinking on his knees on the slimy seaweeded steps. "I'm as innocent as a babe unborn. Think of my wife and poor children at Hawick. Oh! sir, I can't be held guilty for Mr Derryboyd's villainy. Spare me, Mr Fuller, spare me; and may the Lord have mercy on my soul."

The captain was so tragically comic that I nearly burst out laughing.

"What's to be done, sir?" asked the senior of the two constables. "Do you charge this man?"

Lunker broke out into fresh lamentations. Anthony interrupted them with the curt remark, "Shut up howling!" then giving the policemen (as he told me afterwards) a sovereign apiece, he said: "Follow me, and keep your eye on that rascal." Then he turned to the shivering Lunker. "Send back the launch to the yacht," he said shortly.

"And what's to become of me?" moaned Lunker.

"Oh! I'll take care of you," returned Anthony. "I'll put you up at my hotel. Now send the launch back or——," he showed the revolver, which had a very unpleasant sheen in the moonlight. The policemen, as I thought, then, very obligingly, carried our "gripsacks," and after knocking for some time we succeeded in forcing the entrance of the hotel, where we had left our trunks. The wretched Lunker looked about, I could see, for some channel of escape, but Anthony was relentless. "My friend," he said to the landlord, "has been indulging too freely in the juice of the pernicious juniper. I've promised his wife to look after him,

so show me a bedroom very high up, where we can lock him up for the night. I daresay," he said, with a wink at the policemen, "that one of these constables will watch outside the room all night."

"It's our duty to do so," observed the younger member of the force. Lunker appeared stunned by misfortune, when Anthony, the constable, the landlord, and myself carefully deposited him in room No. 316, so elevated above the pavement, that fracture of the spine would be the inevitable result of any attempt at leaping from the window. Lunker sighed deeply when he saw his surroundings. Anthony, who was ever kind-hearted, sent the landlord down for a bottle of Bass, and, when he delivered it to the captive, he carefully locked the door, and exclaiming, "Constable, keep watch on that miscreant," he went downstairs, followed by the landlord, myself, and the policeman. We spent a merry night and morning, which would have been more pleasant had not the senior constable insisted upon singing, not once, twice, or thrice, but six times, "I'll meet you in the Lane." He had not a pleasant voice moreover.

The sun was shining gallantly when we adjourned to roost, regardless of our prisoner. "We shall make a bit out of this," remarked Anthony Fuller, as he wagged my hand on retirement to what he called his "humble cot." But before he went to bed, Anthony wrote out a telegram to Mr Derryboyd's London agent, and instructed the boots to despatch it directly the post-office was open. He also told him to attend to the creature comforts of our captive, but to be sure and remind him that a constable was waiting on the stairs.

It was past two o'clock in the afternoon before I was aroused by Anthony from the profound sleep into which I had fallen, directly I found myself between the sheets.

"Get up, Jack," said Tony. "Derryboyd's agent, Mr Bickerstaff, has arrived. I've told him the whole story, but he wants to see you."

"All right," I rejoined ; "but give me time to wash and dress." I felt as most human beings do when aroused from their slumbers, rather nasty, but a strong application of cold water speedily relieved my feelings, and caused my blood to circulate more generously, and I went down to the private sitting-room, where a waiter told me Mr Fuller expected me, in a more or less amiable frame of mind. Mr Bickerstaff was, I speedily found out, a solicitor, but he was very far removed from the accepted idea of a man of law. He was dressed in a loud plaid suit, sported a crimson necktie confined by an emerald ring, and although his moustache was grey, it was curled in what was then known as Guardsman's fashion.

"Ha! ha!" he said, on my appearance. "Here's the Second Villain. Action for unlawful imprisonment, aiding and abetting principal. That's what you're liable to, Mr Franklyn."

"Look here, Mr Bickerstaff," broke in Anthony. "Stow that, and let's come to the point. I've had my life attempted by your precious client. Here's a witness to the fact, and I've got the aider and abettor safely caged upstairs. You know this isn't the first time of asking," he added significantly.

Mr Bickerstaff played nervously with the ends of his moustache, and then said: "But what, my

dear Mr Fuller, has this gambling brawl to do with me?"

"Everything," replied Anthony, thumping the table with his fist; "who sent me on board of that cursed yacht; who knew the character of the owner; and who proposed that I should carry him off to the States? *You*."

"You've no proof of your assertion," said Mr Bickerstaff, again ravaging the *pomade hongroise* on his hirsute ornament.

"Haven't I?" retorted Anthony fiercely. "Let me gently remind you that upstairs I possess Captain Lunker."

"You're welcome to him," remarked Mr Bickerstaff coolly; "his evidence won't be forthcoming."

"Possibly not," said Anthony; "but what about this individual?" He drew aside a screen at the end of the room, and revealed Paul, whilom page-boy at Bottlestrap's Hotel, and late third steward on board of *The Seven Sisters*.

Mr Bickerstaff could not restrain himself. "You d—d rascal!" cried the lawyer. "So you're turning Queen's evidence, are you?"

"Yes, sir," said Paul. "It's about time *you* did too. What about——"

"Be quiet, you scoundrel!" thundered Mr Bickerstaff. "I don't want any of your chin music." Then he turned to Anthony. "Now, Mr Fuller," he said; "I see there will have to be a treaty of peace, but I won't talk before that man."

"Very good," replied Anthony. "Paul, leave the room, and don't trouble to put your ear to the key-hole, because I've got a habit of running this through it when I don't want a conversation overheard." And

Anthony showed the ex-steward a lady's hat-pin of prodigious length. Paul bowed, grinned, and retreated.

"Have you any objection to my friend, Mr Franklyn, remaining during this interview?" asked Anthony.

"On social grounds, no," replied Mr Bickerstaff; "but on grounds compatible with personal security, yes."

"He is a gentleman, and to be trusted," said Anthony.

"I don't dispute the fact," observed Mr Bickerstaff, "but you and I must fight this question out single-handed. Neither of us, I take it, wants an ally."

"Quite so," acquiesced Anthony; "Jack, I think now that Mr Bickerstaff is assured of your identity, you'd better follow Paul's example." Somewhat ruffled in my dignity, I left the room without speaking a word to either of them. In the passage I met Paul.

"Oh! Mr Franklyn," he said; "this is truly awful. You don't know Mr Derryboyd as I do, sir. Every man jack on *The Seven Sisters* is bound to him body and soul. Do, sir, as you value your life and Mr Fuller's, beg of him to let bad alone, and never venture on that vessel again."

Paul seemed dreadfully frightened, and spoke with great earnestness, but I could not help smiling at the idea of a modern Blackbeard, calmly anchoring off Margate, and defying all legal authority. "Keep your mind easy, Paul," I said. "Mr Fuller knows what he's about. I'm going out for a stroll. If he asks for me, tell him I'll be back in half an hour." With that I went out and walked up the road towards Cliftonville, musing on the strange incidents which had

occurred on the yacht. I had not gone far, when I was awakened to reality by the piercing screams of a woman, and the shouts of loud-voiced men. I looked up and saw a Norwich cart drawn by a run-away pony, rushing down the hill. The only occupant of the vehicle was a gaudily-attired lady, who had dropped the reins and was shrieking like a steamboat in distress. The more she howled and the more the men, running after the trap, yelled, the faster went the pony. Now, I had always been a particularly expert performer at the game called Aunt Sally. At Windsor Fair I had repeatedly been requested to desist from knocking the pipes out of the coloured lady's mouth by her proprietors, and on the occasion, when I shirked chapel and absence, and ran to Ascot with "Cocky" Larkhall, I had decimated the cocoa-nuts at a gipsy establishment. Here, some sudden impulse prompted me to try my aim on the pony. I had a thick oak stick in my hand, and just as the bewildered beast approached me, I let the staff fly full on his head. He stopped dead, and fell on his knees, and in an instant I had hold of his bit. Directly afterwards the cart was surrounded by its noisy pursuers. The lady had ceased to scream, for she had fainted. Handing the reins to a policeman, I hastened to help her out. Judge of my surprise, when I recognised Mrs Sharraton. She was quite unconscious and helpless, and would have continued so, had not a charitable old lady in the crowd, which quickly foregathered, thrust a smelling-bottle to the nostrils of my former landlady. After a sniff or two, and a convulsive trembling, she came to, and gazed wildly around.

"Who stopped the pony?" she asked.

"I did," I said. "Jump out, Mrs Sharraton. It's all right now."

Her beautiful eyes opened wider than ever, and really! I believe that Mrs Sharraton could enlarge her eyeballs more than any woman living. Some one told me that she had certain fibres of the eyelids cut when a girl, and hence the optical illusion. However, when her glance fell on me, she exclaimed, "What, you, Jack Franklyn! God bless you for saving my life." And, stepping nimbly out of the pony-cart, she fell, like David in the Scriptures, upon my neck, and kissed me, amid the applause of the bystanders. I felt as shamefaced as a wet nurse, who, on applying for a situation, confesses that she has not been churched, but I had sufficient presence of mind to tell the man holding the pony's head, to take the equipage to the livery-stable, where Mrs Sharraton had hired it. Mrs Sharraton and I then got into a fly, and drove to her lodgings, the while she beslavered me with thanks and praise for my "gallantry." I could not get a word in edgeways. Her domicile was in one of those old-fashioned houses, built in the days when London doctors recommended that there should be no windows fronting the sea, on account of the pernicious winds. "Come in, Jack," said Mrs Sharraton, "and have a glass of wine. I still feel faint."

"Are you alone?" I asked suspiciously, remembering how I had seen her at the Café Regent with Flaherty, and the lie of which she had subsequently placed the Wicked Uncle in receipt at the Tiptoff Club.

"Alone, Jack!" she cooed softly, "of course I am. You forget that I am a widow."

I could not help it. Perhaps I was brutal, but I said

brusquely, "How about Cornelius Flaherty or Mac-Washington, as he wrongfully describes himself?"

Some women flush red as the rose on being probed to the heart, others fade into the whiteness of the lily. Mrs Sharraton, for very good reasons, could do neither, but she stamped one of her very dainty feet and exclaimed: "Come into the house, Jack Franklyn, and tell me what you mean by that insulting remark!" She led the way to what I believe seaside-landladies call the drawing-room, because there are a couple of hideous candlesticks with pendant cut glass on the mantelpiece, a case of stuffed birds on the chiffonnier, and a number of hard-ribbed antimacassars on the rickety chairs. Mrs Sharraton threw her pretty lilac-covered bonnet on the sofa, and said defiantly, "I want to know what you meant by your suggestion just now?"

"Only what I said," I replied. "Perhaps you don't know the Café Regent and Smith's Hotel?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," she stammered.

"But I do," I answered. "And perhaps my great-aunt Penelope, Mrs MacWashington-Flaherty, does too by this time." I have often encountered angry women in my time, but I have never met such a female Catherine-wheel as Mrs Sharraton. Before I was well aware of the assault, she had flown at me, torn several hundred hairs (I wish I had them now) from my head, scratched my cheeks on either side, twisted me round and round, and exclaiming, "Get out of this!" administered with the pretty boot, which I had admired but five minutes before, such a kick to my person as would not have disgraced "long behind," in the field at Eton. I required

no other bidding message. I rushed from Mrs Sharraton's lodgings to the hotel. Anthony met me with Smith on the steps.

"Hallo, Jack," he said, "you looked fagged, but it's all right. Bickerstaff has gone, and Lunker has gone, and I've got this." He showed me a cheque for £2000. "Not bad is it, but I haven't had my revenge all the same. But I'll have it, as surely as my name's Anthony Fuller. By the way, here's a wire for you." I read the despatch. It read:

"Pack up your traps, you leave to-morrow for Bingenstadt. Come to my rooms first thing in the morning—WICKED UNCLE."

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH

BINGENSTADT

I WILL pass over my parting from Uncle Philip and Anthony Fuller, who accompanied me to London, and presented me with a sealskin cigar case at Charing Cross Station. Suffice it to say, that we were all there in the most doleful dumps. The last words of the Wicked Uncle were: "I'll come and test your gauge as soon as I can, my hearty!"

Anthony's *vale* was: "Be sure and let me know if there's any racing going on at Bingenstadt, and, if there is, I'll hop over like ninepence."

I travelled *via* Brussels, Cologne, and Mayence. Only one incident on my journey is worth recording. At Cologne Station, while I was partaking of the afterwards eternal, but then novel, "*kalb's côtelette*," I was attracted by the considerable bustle of a party entering the refreshment room. A courier, with doffed cap, was ushering the travellers to a table specially reserved. The courier said, in far better English than is spoken in Soho or Shoreditch: "The train for Goudenbad does not start for half-an-hour, your Grace. You have ample time for *dejeuner à la fourchette*. I have ordered a slip carriage to be added to the Bingenstadt Express, and the luncheon awaits your Grace's appetite." At the same time a covey of

waiters blocked all view of the eminent voyagers. My curiosity was aroused, not by the deference expressed in the courier's language, but by the name of the city, to which I was going myself. By dint of craning my neck round the corner, for these aristocratic tourists were seated in an alcove, partially protected by screens, I perceived that the party consisted of an elderly gentleman in a velvet suit, a young girl with her fair hair falling down her back in "tails," and a grey-haired lady with a green "ugly." As they all had their backs turned towards me, I could not determine whether I had seen them before. Since my emancipation from Eton, I am sorry to say—no, I am not sorry to say, for tobacco has been my greatest solace in life—I had taken greatly to smoking the fragrant weed, and I was just about to light one of the fragrant regalias, with which Anthony had stocked the sealskin case, when I recollected that my fellow-citizens do not always appreciate the fumes of nicotine. I therefore got up, and approaching the neighbouring table said, "Will you allow me to smoke, sir?"

The gentleman in velvet turned round and said: "By all means; in Germany we do as the Germans do. I am sure, Beaty, that you won't object, nor you Mademoiselle," he added, bowing to the grey-haired lady.

I seemed always to be picking up surprise packets. The speaker was none other than the Duke of Middlesex, and the girl with the braids of golden hair his daughter, Lady Beatrice Belleisle, the rescued maid of Monkey Island, the damsel whose prayer had won the match for us at Lords. And in my pocket I had the bracelet with the Coral Hand.

I was so taken aback that I could only stammer my thanks and return to my seat, but I heard Lady Beatrice say: "I'm sure I've seen that gentleman before, papa."

"Very likely," returned the Duke, "more people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows."

I confess that I did not care about being called Tom Fool, even by a duke, but any irritation caused by his remark was speedily alleviated by the delight caused by this unexpected meeting with the little lady of my heart. It may seem strange to some readers that I should think in this fashion of Lady Beatrice, especially after my escapades with Tabby, but though cynics may sneer at calf's love, I say that the pure affection of a boy for a girl is as a diamond to a bit of charcoal, or a bright stream to a muddy duck-pond. It is years and years ago since I first saw Beatrice Belleisle at Lords, but I could tell you every line of her features and every detail of her dress. She was photographed on my brain by the sun of love, and when I die the anatomist who splits my skull (for I have left my carcass to the Royal College of Surgeons) ought to find her likeness imprinted therein, as clearly to be seen as is this printer's type. As I watched the ducal travellers, I found my mind wandering back to Monkey Island and my Eton life. I had not gone back to the dear old school to take leave as arranged with my pastors and masters, for the very good reason that the holidays were not yet over. I wondered if my schoolfellows ever thought of me, if Cocky Larkhall and Reggie Gregory would meet me again before we had had time to get new friends, if—but here my reflections were interrupted by a porter rushing into

the refreshment room, and yelling: "*Schnell zug fur Bingenstadt.*" His tones were loud, but to do him justice, one understood what he shouted, which is more than could, and can be said for his brethren on British railways. I saw the Duke of Middlesex, his daughter, and Mademoiselle, get into their saloon carriage. The courier, and several maid-servants and lacqueys were hoisted into a kind of annexe to the drawing-room on wheels. I felt that I should like to be one of them. Then I began to argue with myself whether I ought not to return the bracelet with the coral hand to its lawful owner. I knew that in doing so, I should part with the dearest thing I held on earth, but after all, the trinket was hers not mine, and after much mental wrestling, I resolved that if I could find out the Duke of Middlesex's residence at Goudenbad, I would make restitution of my well-beloved prize. An express train in Germany moves but slowly. Sometimes it comes to a halt, where no station is visible, and then the passengers get out and picnic by the side of the line. On this occasion this incident occurred, and I descended on to the sleepers with the rest of the voyagers. I should state that I was quite alone in my red-velveted, first-class, luxurious compartment, for the economical Teuton rightly leaves such extravagant surroundings to the money-scattering Briton and the Sybaritic Russian. When I got out of the train, I found the guard, engine-driver, and stoker, drinking lager beer out of a huge stone bottle, so I felt certain that I had time for a stroll to the ducal carriage, which was the last one on the train, hitched on behind the luggage van. None of the party had left it, but the duke and Lady Beatrice were looking out

of the open windows as I passed. Seeing this, I did not dare to raise my eyes. I have a trick of playing imaginary cricket when walking; and now, having in my hand the stick which arrested the flight of Mrs Sharraton's runaway pony at Margate, I made a drive at a pebble lying near the rails. As I did so, I heard Lady Beatrice's voice exclaim, "I *knew* I had seen him before, papa. That's Mr Franklyn, who made the winning hit for Eton." I turned and bolted for my compartment, like a rabbit to his burrow. I was altogether abashed, but not a little delighted at the young girl's recognition. As we plodded along the vine-clad banks of the Rhine, I could not help comparing my devotion to this gentle maid, so far above me, with my mad desire for Tabby, the reckless deceiver, so far below me. I have read somewhere that every man has two natures, the one upright and honest, the other doubtful and debased. I thoroughly believe in the theory, but I am sorry to say that, according to my experience, the better nature has but a poor chance with the viler.

Before we got to Mayence the train stopped again, and I saw the Duke of Middlesex's saloon carriage detached. As we lumbered on again I felt depressed, but I was comforted by the fact that I knew where to find the owner of the Coral Hand.

It was quite in the gloaming that I arrived at Bingenstadt. An individual in a helmet, with a sword by his side, demanded my passport directly I alighted on the platform. Providentially, this official spoke in bad French. Everybody, I subsequently found out, spoke bad French in Bingenstadt, and having pretended to read the document, adorned with the armorial bearings of Lord Granville, he graciously

intimated that I was free to proceed to my destination. At the same time he informed me that he was a philatelist, and enquired if I had any new English shilling stamps in my pocket. I answered no, but that I had three English shillings, which were at his service. He said they would be valuable to him, as he was also a numismatist, and having tested the quality of the coins with his teeth, he thrust them into a large canvas bag with a brass clasp. I ventured to enquire if he would kindly direct me to the house of Major Pickelstein. His manner immediately changed. Instead of being proud and overbearing, he became deferential and courteous. "I will conduct you there myself," he said. "It shall cost you nothing." With that he clouted two porters over the head with his open palm, and directed them to place my luggage on a droscky. I was much astonished at his politeness, and still more by his information that the major was the brother of the ever-to-be-respected Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Bingenstadt. We jolted up a broad street, apparently paved with blocks of granite, thrown higgledy-piggledy on the ground, and, as I could see by the light of the oil lamps, plentifully adorned with a rich crop of hay. We passed beneath a column considerably higher than the Nelson Monument in Trafalgar Square.

"To the memory of our Grand Duke Wilhelm the Benefactor," observed my companion with a wave of his hand. "He sent his soldiers to fight in all the great campaigns, sometimes for the English, sometimes for the French, sometimes for the Spaniards, sometimes for the Dutch, but always for himself. A great man, our Grand Ducal Benefactor."

The droscky stopped at a brown stone house, in front of which a man, smoking a china pipe, was polishing a pair of military boots, with such zeal that he did not perceive our arrival till my friend, the numismatist, drew up in front of him, clicked his heels together, and pointing to me exclaimed, "*Noch ein Engländer, Herr Major.*" The boot-cleaning man threw his Hessian on the ground, and advancing with open hand, exclaimed in English, "Welcome to Bingenstadt." Delighted to hear my native tongue, I asked him what I ought to pay the cabman. He shook his head, implying that he did not understand me, indeed I then discovered that Major Pickelstein, for he it was, could only speak English to the extent of the phrase with which he had greeted me, together with "Yes," "No," and "How are you?" However, he could, like all Bingenstadders, speak indifferent French; and I, having bade a polite good-night to the numismatist, was soon installed in my new abode. Frau Pickelstein, the Major's wife, was a stout, good-looking woman of about thirty, with dark hair and languishing hazel eyes. As a girl she must have been pretty, but sauer kraut and sugar had destroyed her figure and her teeth. Moreover, she was the mother of five robust children, four boys and one girl. The good lady, who trembled like a bulrush in the Thames when she showed me to my bedroom, informed me in Teutonic-French, that supper would be ready in ten minutes, and that she hoped I should be comfortable. She blushed deeply as she uttered these simple words. I afterwards found out that Frau Pickelstein invariably fell in love, quite platonically, with every fresh pupil imported by her husband. Let me make myself clear. When I say platonically, I mean it.

The worthy lady was devoted to her husband, but she imagined that her radiant charms must make an impression upon susceptible youth, and she hastened to anticipate the feeling. With the young fellows, who boarded with her, she was still the coy virgin, whom Bernhard Pickelstein had carried off from a bevy of ardent lovers, a decade before my arrival at the Grand Ducal Residenzstadt. My apartment was not luxuriously furnished, but it was exquisitely clean, and the carpetless boards were as polished as the flanks of a thoroughbred. I noticed, however, that I was not the only occupant of the room, for there were two beds in it. I was washing the dust and dirt off my head, hands, and arms, when the door was thrown violently open. With my eyes full of soap-suds, I confronted the intruder. I could scarcely believe my dimmed vision. There *in propria persona* was my dear old messmate, Cocky Larkhall, whom I believed to be still pursuing his studies at the College of the Blessed Virgin of Eton by Windsor. I do not know which of us was the more surprised. Larkhall found his breath first.

"Bingo, by Jove!" he cried; "well, this beats Banagher."

"Cocky," I exclaimed; "what are you doing here?"

"That's easily explained," he answered. "My poor old dad died on the second day of the Harrow match, just about the time, Bingo, when you knocked off the runs. The mater didn't want me to go back to school; and, as it had been settled I should go to Pickelstein's to pick up some high Dutch for the army exam., my worthy uncle, and guardian, started me off here, without thinking of holidays and other delights. I didn't object, because I'm fond of change of air, and

being in mourning, there wasn't much chance of gaiety for me in England. Don't think me an unfeeling brute, Bingo, but, do you know, I think all this crape business is stupid nonsense. While the old man was alive, I loved to be in his company, but now he's gone aloft, I know he's much happier than he ever was on earth. Why then weep for his happy release from all worldly troubles? I know, if he could wire down from Abraham's bosom, he'd say, 'Keep your pecker up, Charlie, and don't fool about hatbands and black-bordered pocket-handkerchiefs.' I've been here ten days, and feel quite happy. And what brings you here, Bingo?"

I explained as briefly as I could, and asked what sort of people Major and Mrs Picklestein were.

"Right as rain," returned Larkhall. "The major is a kind of Minor Blucher, and his Frau imagines herself to be Venus very much adorned, but they're both good sorts. The Major really won the battle of Sedan, don't forget that; and his wife might have married the Grand Duke morganatically. Please remember that. Now let's to the Swiss cheese, the pickled herrings, and the Bavarian swipes on which we shall sup frugally, but also well. There are two other English chaps here—Tolly, he's the son of the celebrated pickle merchant—you know Tolly's Piccalilli—and Rashwood, one of the Hampshire Rashwoods, comes from Wellington, and, like all Wellingtonians that I've come across, as full of conceit as an egg is of young chicken."

The supper was slightly different from Larkhall's description, inasmuch as we began with a soup composed of hot milk and wild strawberries, followed by maccaroni and stewed plums, but, as Cocky had

foretold, pickled herrings and Gruyère cheese were the staple items of the bill of fare. Tolly was a fair, stolid youth, who was trying to cultivate whiskers. He was destined for the Indian Department of Woods and Forests. Rashwood was a little dark, Italian-looking fellow (his mother's mother was a Sicilian Countess), who openly made love to Frau Pickelstein during the meal, and was rewarded by the primest tit-bits from the various dishes. Major Pickelstein never opened his mouth but to fill it; and that his digestion was good, I was certain, for he ate six herrings, with both maccaroni and plums in his plate, aiding his fork with a dexterous application of knife inside his lips. The repast over, Tolly, Rashwood, and Larkhall rose and bowed solemnly to the Major and his wife. I did likewise. Frau Pickelstein blushed and curtsied. Her husband saluted us in military style.

"And now," said Larkhall, when we were clear of the dining-room; "we'll just pop round to Limburger's and have a game of billiards. There's a capital chap comes in there, a red-haired Irishman, by name MacWashington."

"MacWashington!" I cried. "Why, he must be——" I stopped.

"Of course," said Larkhall; "a relation of yours. I forgot your grandfather was Lord MacWashington, and, by the way, this cove asked me if I knew you. Lord bless me! What a fool I was to forget that you might be connected."

"I don't want to meet the man," I cried; "I hate him, and he has no right to the name, which he dishonours."

"Hoighty-toighty!" said Larkhall, very much sur-

prised ; " what price Bingo on stilts ? but you'll come to Limburger's all the same, and if you and Rufus fall out, let me order pistols for two and coffee for one at the Grabelberg Restaurant in the Waldstrasse to-morrow morning. It's a pity your friend Anthony Fuller isn't here to see the fun."

I thought so too, and sorely against my will went with the others to Limburger's. That visit cost me a good deal more than I could suppose when I left the portals of Major Pickelstein's house.

CHAPTER *"COUNT O'FLAHERTY,"*
SEVENTEENTH *FERRY CARMICHAEL,*
 AND MRS SHARRATON

THE news that my great-uncle by marriage, Mr Cornelius Flaherty, had turned up in Bingenstadt, filled me with considerable dismay. Although I had not seen him to speak to for years, I was perfectly certain that he still bore me ill-will, and there was a disagreeable savour about his doings with Mrs Sharraton which made me by no means desirous to renew acquaintance with my former preceptor. However, I was never physically afraid of anybody, whatever may have been my shortcomings in what is known as "moral courage," a virtue which in these days appears to shine above all other qualities, and is largely possessed by thieves in all grades of society. For instance, the poor wretch, who has been driven to some fraudulence by a Judas of a money-lender, is considered a far worse scoundrel than an impudent company promoter, who robs thousands of pounds from a confiding public, and then adroitly rushes through the Bankruptcy Court with the rapidity of a rider on a switchback railway. However, I did not utter any objection to accompanying Cocky Larkhall to the "restauration" of his choice, and I speedily perceived Mr Flaherty, when we entered the smoke-laden room. Nor was he slow in noticing my appearance. Looking none the worse for the cuff which he got from

Anthony outside of the Oxford, he came forward with a beaming smile on his great red lips and an outstretched hand.

"Me dearr nephew," he exclaimed, "this is indeed a pleasurre. Gintlemen," he said, addressing the assembled company, "this is the own flesh and blood—the eldest grrandson of me relative, the Lorrd Viscount MacWashington, the great ambassadorr. Blood is thicker than whiskey, so we'll drink his health in the sanguinary jooce of the Rhenish grape. Kellner, three bottles of Affenthalerr!"

A murmur of sympathy arose from the bystanders, all of whom appeared to understand and speak English, even when spoken with the accent of Hibernia. As indeed why should they not, since I knew very soon that most of them had been shilling-seekers at the numerous hotels of Great Britain. This was the case even with two or three who wore the uniform of the Grand Duchy, distinguished from that of Prussia by the worsted shoulder-knots being embroidered with violet and white, the national colours, while some of the cavaliers enjoyed the right, on high holidays, of wearing violet stripes down their pantaloons. These privileges were secured by treaty, after the war of 1866, and were regarded as highly creditable to Bingenstadt diplomacy. I could not resist Flaherty's hospitality, although I resented his pretended relationship. In his attire, I noticed, he affected a quasi-military undress, and had several bits of ribbon dotted about the left breast of his coatee. Everybody addressed him as "Herr Graf," and his cards—one of which is lying before me as I write—were inscribed: "Cornelius Phelim O'Flaherty-MacWashington, Count O'Flaherty, Viscount MacWashington of Mount Rore, Prince of Ballygavar."

The lettering is surmounted by an Irish crown, and altogether it is a very tasteful production. Flaherty had evidently made up his mind that Larkhall and I should enjoy ourselves. We played a curious game of pool, whereat it was not the competitor who took the most balls who won, but he who pocketed those with the highest numbers on them. We sang the "Wacht am Rhein," and "Rule Britannia," and we supped off brown bread and butter, pickled herrings, sauer kraut, and Swiss cheese, washed down, despite the previous libations of red wine, with countless beakers of Bavarian beer. I do not remember the end of that supper. Cocky Larkhall told me next day that I had made a speech advocating the inclusion of Great Britain into the fold of the German Empire, and the partition of France. Perhaps I was guilty of these atrocities, but I know that I was very drunk, and must have been carried to bed. I daresay that to some readers the avowal of such conduct may seem very disgraceful, but my dear *Monsieur* or *Madame Prudhomme*, I am not, alas! telling the story of the Immaculate, but relating the narrative of the Sinful. There are those, who get inebriated with whiskey and lager beer; there are also those, who lose their heads under other influences, dangerous alike to name and fame. I would rather take an overdose of spirits or ale, than too much fanaticism or bigotry.

I awoke the next morning with a splitting headache. Cocky was still snoring, so I got out of bed quietly, and rang the bell. It was answered by a stout, fair youth in military garb. I explained to him that I felt very bad. At the word "bad," he shook his head. "*Keine bad, mein herr*," he said with a salute, "*aber*"

—and he pointed to a slop basin with a milk-jug in it on the dressing-table.

"Bad! Bad here!" I repeated, pointing to my forehead.

"*Ach so!*" he exclaimed, a gleam of intelligence issuing from his placid light blue eyes, "*Ach so! Katzenjammer! 'ein Augenblick! der Lord kennt das gar wohl.*" He approached the bed of the sleeping Larkhall, and shook that personage somewhat roughly.

Cocky, after considerable mauling, opened his eyes and ejaculated, "All right, tell my dame to send in an excuse."

Ill as I felt, I could not help laughing at Larkhall's remark, and, crossing to his couch, I thundered in his ear, "You've got to *stay* after eleven o'clock school."

This had the desired effect. He sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes, and said, "Great Zeus's trousers! who said stay?" Then he recognised us, and burst out laughing. "What's up?" he cried.

"*Katzenjammer!*" said the soldier, pointing to me.

"Ja! Ja!" responded the grinning Cocky, handing the Teuton a florin, "*Apotheke gleich!*" The man saluted and disappeared. "A willing rascal," observed Larkhall; "Lord bless me! how these Prussians do get these Bingenstadters into form."

"Prussians," I said, "what have the Prussians got to do with Saxe-Bingenstadt?"

"Ask me another?" replied Cocky. "It's what they haven't to do with the Grand Duchy, which puzzles me. Poor old Napoleon must have been precious badly advised if he wasn't told that since the Austrian war all these Southern States are right under the thumb of Bismarck and Berlin. They've all got nominally their armies, but who commands

them? Prussian colonels, Prussian majors, Prussian captains, Prussian lieutenants, Prussian serjeants, and Prussian corporals. In short, the whole of the forces are painted Prussian blue. Here the native Bingenstadt officers have all been drafted into Prussian regiments, and are cooling their Bingenstadt boots in Silesia, Westphalia, Pomerania, and other agreeable provinces of the Black Eagle country. Then note how these same Prussians treat their dear allies. Why, only yesterday on the Exerciren Platz—that's the drill ground—I saw a Prussian serjeant pull the moustache of a Bingenstadter recruit out by the roots, because his face was a bit on one side, and a corporal stick his sword bayonet into the lower back of another, because his shoulders weren't straight enough. And remember this, Jack, never have words with a German officer. You may be in the right and he in the wrong, but if you, a civilian, insult him, as he thinks, he's not only enjoined to draw his sword, but to run you through, and kill you if he can."

"What a pack of brutes!" I exclaimed.

"Discipline, old man, discipline!" retorted Charlie, "and by the Lord Harry! it does make fine soldiers. But here comes Fritz with our hair restorer."

The latter proved to be a great restorative. "What will Major Pickelstein say?" I asked Larkhall when we had finished our toilettes, without much ablution, it being customary at Bingenstadt to obtain this at the Town Baths.

"Pickels won't say anything," replied Cocky, "he has a convenient theory that any one wishing to learn a language should mix freely with the native population, and not bother for the first few months about grammar and literature."

"Doesn't he hold any classes?" I asked.

"Of course not, he's got his duties to attend to at the riding school. Of course Pickels being a Bingenstadter is not allowed by the Prussians to have any responsible position in the active list, so, as he's a capital rider, they've told him off to break in horses and cavalry recruits."

"But what about our exams?" I enquired, somewhat startled at the Major's free-and-easy methods.

"Don't worry your head about them," said Larkhall, "Pickels keeps a tame tutor. Just before your exam. he'll stuff you as full of knowledge as a pork butcher would a sausage skin of minced meat. Of course if you want to do a little 'sapping' now and again, Kraps, that's the tutor's name, is always on the premises. He's a very good chap, shovels his food down his throat with a knife, and is madly in love with Frau Pickelstein in a platonic way. Now, let's go and have some breakfast. I'll bet we have sausage, calf's brains, potatoes fried in dripping, Gouda cheese, and chicory coffee."

His prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. After breakfast, at which the Major was not present, but was represented by Frau Pickelstein and several of her progeny, who had evidently been instructed by Herr Kraps in the use of the knife, we sallied forth to inspect the town, leaving our fellow students to their own devices, and possibly the instruction of the tutor, for he was lurking about the dining-room door when we went out.

"Not to-day, baker," was the sole salutation vouchsafed to him by Larkhall.

Herr Kraps bowed and smiled, and ejaculated, "A fine day to you, gentlemen," as he left him.

I was not even introduced to the worthy man

by Larkhall, who explained, "You don't want to be bothered by his polite enquiries after the health of your high, well-born family, and a lecture on the social difference existing in the fatherland between the 'vons' and the 'non-vons.' And now," he added, "we'll go and look up Jerry Carmichael, the British *Chargé d'Affaires*. He's a sort of cousin of mine, and really only Secretary of Legation, but since the late minister, old Laburnum, was transferred to Copenhagen, the F. O. hasn't appointed another, because Bismarck won't have one man, and the Grand Duke won't have another. And so while they're wasting reams of paper over the business, Jerry stays on and draws extra pay for doing nothing. You'll like him, Bingo, he's a first-rate chap. The Prussians don't love him because of a little deal in which he got the best of them. You must know that there is a custom at balls here, that if you're dancing with a girl, a man may come up and ask your permission to 'hospiteren,' that is, to give your partner a spin round the room while you look on. It's a rotten habit, but when in Turkey you must do as the Turks do. Well, one night at the Casino—that's the big club here—Jerry Carmichael sees a young fraulein of his acquaintance doing, as he thought, the wallflower. So he goes up and asks her to finish the polka with him. Not being a 'von' she thought this was a great chance of figuring before the world with a diplomatic swell, and smilingly accepted, not telling Jerry—like a treacherous little monkey—that she was being partnered by Lieutenant von Blauenblitz of the Grand Duke's Lifeguards, who had gone to fetch her fan from the cloak-room. The unconscious Jerry, who is a splendid dancer—he used to lead the cotillon at the

Tuileries—footed it with the fraülein till the polka was over, when he was confronted with the scowling visage of Lieutenant von Blauenblitz, who said, 'How dare you, sir, dance with that demoiselle?' indicating the trembling virgin hanging on Jerry's arm. 'Are you her *fiancé*?' asked Jerry, very much astonished, and also very angry, at the soldier's manner. 'No, sir, I am not,' replied the lieutenant, 'but——' 'But me no buts,' interrupted Jerry, 'fraülein, let us leave this impudent, and doubtless over-wined person, and go to supper.' Whereupon he carried off the damsel to the feeding room, leaving Von Blauenblitz absolutely speechless with rage. Jerry spent a very pleasant evening, and thought no more of the incident till the next day, when a rap came upon the door of the room at his apartment, which he has made a temporary *Chancellerie*. 'Come in,' shouted Jerry, who, in his shirt sleeves, was smoking a pipe.

"There entered unto him a young officer in gala uniform—that is to say, he was rigged out with white horsehair in his helmet and silver stripes on his breeches. He knocked his heels together, and said slowly in English—'Your Excellency, I am Lieutenant von Hoberg, of the Grand Ducal Lifeguard Regiment, and I come at the instance of my friend, Lieutenant von Blauenblitz, of the same corps, to demand an apology from you, in that you did, at the Casino last night, from his arms, without the courtesy of hospiteren, abduct the Fraülein Emma Schmitt, daughter of the honourable Geheimrath Julius Schmitt.'

"Jerry listened to this discourse without moving a muscle, though he was ready to die with laughter. 'Return here,' he said, 'at three o'clock, Herr von

Hoberg, and you shall have my answer. I have to demand this favour of you, because I am expecting the royal courier to call for my despatches.'

"Lieutenant von Hoberg knocked his heels together, bowed, and disappeared. At three o'clock he went through his former performance again. This time, however, he found Jerry in his uniform, with his cocked hat lying beside him. With a very stern air he said to Lieutenant von Hoberg — 'I have carefully considered the request of Lieutenant von Blauenblitz, that I should tender him an apology for a breach of politeness of which I was wholly innocent. Now, sir,' he thundered, striking the table with his fist, 'I have consulted the most competent authorities, and I find that, by my position, I rank with a major in the German army. Consequently, I am Lieutenant von Blauenblitz's superior officer. If, therefore, I do not receive, within an hour, an ample apology in writing from him for this serious breach of etiquette, I shall report both of you to the Commandant of the town, and leave him to deal with the case. Do you understand me, sir, within an hour, that is, by four o'clock?' And he waved Herr von Hoberg out of the room. By half-past three he was reading, greatly to his amusement, Lieutenant von Blauenblitz's long-winded excuse for his ill-advised and never-to-be-renewed offence. 'Tell him,' said Jerry grandly to von Hoberg, 'that I frankly and fully forgive his indiscretion.' The Prussians, however, haven't followed his example. But here we are at his diggings. We'll go to his private rooms." So, on the first floor of a white-painted airy house, we rang the bell at a green door. It was immediately opened by a brawny Irishman, who greeted Charlie Larkhall with a bene-

volent smile, and in reply to Cocky's enquiry of whether Mr Carmichael was at home, replied—

"No and yes, my lord. At the present moment he's engaged with an Irish nobleman in the *Chancellerie*."

"Any one I know?" asked Larkhall, carelessly beckoning me to follow him into a pretty sitting-room, embellished with photographs, water-colours, old Dresden china, Japanese and Eastern curios; at one end of the apartment was a door, and a bookcase filled with handsomely bound volumes of the literature of all countries—for Carmichael was a great collector, as well as reader, of the works of all men and women in all ages. The door, I should mention, though I did not know it then, led into the *Chancellerie*. "Is Mr Carmichael's visitor any one I know?" repeated Larkhall.

But Mr Croke was far too astute to give away his master's business, and with a deferential whisper, "Excuse me, my lord, I think I hear the bell," he glided from the room.

Charlie, in nowise disconcerted, helped himself to a cigarette from a Russian silver case, and then drew my attention to the books. "Jerry," he observed, pointing to the bookcase, "has got some of the rarest bits of writing in the world, not all of them, you know, what our godfathers and godmothers would like us to read on Sundays. Now here," he said, pulling out a volume bound in blue morocco, "is, I believe, an original edition of Boccaccio. It's worth I don't know how much tin. Jerry says it's no good my looking at it, because I don't understand Italian, but the pictures are decidedly funnier than those which we used to buy from old Nunicles. Just have a look, Bingo!"

But before I could survey the precious quarto, a loud altercation in the next room—the *Chancellerie*—

attracted our attention simultaneously, the more so as I heard my own name pronounced by a voice, which I recognised as Flaherty's.

"I tell ye, Mr Carrmichael," he exclaimed, "that this bhoy is me own grreat-nephew—don't I show ye the prroofs, sorr—and I wish to make deposition before ye as rrepresentative of Her Most Grracious Majestee, that in my opinion his education is being sadly neglected, and that the Courtt of Chancerree should be approached to prrovide him with another guardian, that same to be meself by rright of me wife, the Honourrable Penelope MacWashington. Why, only last night, sorr, I carried the poor lad home afterr a carrouse in the lowest company to be found in Bingenstadt !"

Said another voice — "Look here, Mr Flaherty MacWashington, or whatever you call yourself, if you have any right of interference with Mr John Franklyn, I recommend you to apply to the Courts in England ; but you'll get no help from me. I am a personal friend of Captain Philip Franklyn, and I resent the accusations which you have made against his character as a gentleman, and his duty, as the guardian of his nephew. I must ask you to retire, as I have an important interview with the Russian Minister."

"Bravo, Jerry !" whispered Cocky, to my wonder-struck self.

"Then ye won't help me ?" thundered Flaherty.

"Certainly not," replied the other voice.

"Then," shouted Mr Flaherty, "I'll write to Lord Grranville, and complain of the dastarrdly affrront offered to me in this beggarrly office."

"Do," responded the other voice, "I'll frank the letter for you if you like. Now go !"

Then we heard the sound of a very strong expletive, followed by the slamming of a door, and a hilarious chuckle from the owner of the other voice, and before Larkhall could replace Boccacio in the bookcase, we were face to face with a dark-moustached handsome man, looking about thirty-two, but possibly not so old.

"Hallo! Master Charlie," he exclaimed, "caught red-handed again among my treasures! I beg your pardon," he added, turning to me, "I didn't see you."

"Allow me," said Cocky, "to make you acquainted. Mr Gerald Carmichael, Her Britannic Majesty's *Chargé d'Affaires* at the High and Illustrious Court of Saxe - Bingenstadt, Mr John Mac-Washington Franklyn, of——"

"What!" exclaimed the diplomatist, holding out his hand, "Mr John Franklyn, I'm glad to see you. I have heard of you before."

"Just so, Jerry," put in Cocky, "two minutes ago, eh?"

"You young dog!" cried Carmichael wrathfully, "were you listening at the *Chancellerie* door?"

"We couldn't help listening," I said, apologetically. "We really didn't mean to, but you and that man Flaherty talked so loud."

"Ah!" said the *Chargé d'Affaires*, good-humouredly, "I suppose his tone did raise my pitch, but of course I had no idea that any one was in here. Did you overhear all his remarks?"

"I heard him say that he wished to be appointed my guardian," I broke in fiercely. "I'd rather be hanged than that I should be under the thumb of that scoundrel!"

"Gently, gently," said Carmichael. "It is no use flashing powder before you've got any bullets. Now, let me hear about last night's proceedings."

Larkhall gave him a full and particular account of the episode at Limburger's Restauration.

Gerald Carmichael listened attentively, and, when he had finished, gave a low whistle, and exclaimed, "This excellent connection of yours, Mr Franklyn, has evidently some method in his madness. For some reason or other, what I can't at present even suppose, he wants to get you in his power."

"Let's go and rabbit the brute!" cried Cocky. "We three ought to be able to tackle him, and if you, Jerry, don't care to cut in, I'm sure Jack and I could string him up to a lamp-post." *

"Stop! stop!" cried Carmichael. "Don't be such a bloodthirsty ruffian, Charlie. Do listen to me. If you'll follow my advice, I think we shall be able to nonplus Mr Flaherty without fisticuffs or ropes. Now I want you both when you meet him, as you assuredly will, to be as friendly with the rogue as possible. Be on your guard against too much wine or beer, but never avoid his society. I am going to communicate all I know to my old friend, Philip Franklyn, your uncle, Jack. I must call you Jack, like my scapegrace cousin. Meantime, remember that I want to keep Flaherty here. If you frighten the hawk, he may wing it to Baden or Stuttgart, and pitch his yarn into more believing ears than mine. Now, do you promise to be on your best behaviour."

"I'll take my Bible oath I will," cried Charlie Larkhall, "and so I know will old Bingo. Won't you?"

"Of course I will," I replied with as much heart as I could, "but, as the wicked Uncle says, 'By Aaron's rod! I'd like to stuff my flipper into his portholes.'"

"Be easy, Master Jack, you'll get your opportunity," said Jerry Carmichael, "and now I'm going to take you

young men to lunch with me at the Bingenstadter Hof. I don't say that the fare is up to that of the Café Anglais or Bignon's, but the chef is an Alsatian, and as I took care to send him word one day that I had never tasted such pastry as his out of Strasburg, he exercises all his art in delighting the palates of my friends and myself. So I have all my meals at the Bingenstadter. Poor old Laburnum, or rather his wife Lady Matilda, brought over an English cook, with maid-servants to match. The consequence was, as Kromesky, the Russian minister, used to say, that by eating Laburnum's dinners we all gained so many plenary indulgences in Paradise."

So Carmichae! rattled on, not only then, but subsequently, when we found ourselves sitting under a plane tree in the hotel garden, discussing as dainty a meal as it was possible to procure in the Grand Duchy. The Rhine crayfish *à la Bordelaise* (a Franco-German alliance), the partridges on sauer kraut, the steak cutlets larded with bacon and truffles, the anchovy omelette and the *sorbet*, were well worthy of being associated with the delicate bouquet of some fine old Liebfrauen-milch, the real vintage of the Church Vineyard at Worms, not the imitation stuff which you will find on the wine-card of every restaurateur from New York to St Petersburg. We were cheery over the fine fare, the while the breeze played softly among the plane leaves overhead. We had roared over Carmichael's description of Madame de la Creuse, the greatest lady in Bingenstadt (after the Grand Ducal Princesses), who occupied the distinguished office of Grand Maitresse de la Cour, "*une position peu respectable*," as the facetious Kromesky was wont to observe, and, after toying with grapes and

peaches, were about to tackle our coffee, when I exclaimed, "By Jove! *is* she!"

"What's up?"

I pointed to a lady, who had taken a seat at the other end of the garden.

"It's Mrs Sharraton!" I gasped. My explanation of course, was Greek to my friends.

CHAPTER *MRS SHARRATON*
EIGHTEENTH *REVEALS SOMETHING*

MRS SHARRATON'S eyes were as sharp as mine. She had scarcely seated herself when she sent a waiter to me to know if I would be good enough to speak to her for a minute. Excusing myself to Carmichael and Larkhall, I went over to the fair widow of Torquay.

"How d'ye do, Jack?" she said, with one of her most bewitching smiles. "Truly you and I meet in the most unlikely places." She did not refer to the tussle at Margate, nor did I.

"I don't deny it, Mrs Fortinbras," I replied.

She turned pale beneath her rosy cheeks. "Fortinbras!" she stammered. "What do you mean? You know that my name is Sharraton."

"Oh!" I rejoined, in what I conceived to be my most sarcastic manner, "I thought you had married again. Some one told me that your second husband's name was Fortinbras."

"Whoever said that," she cried, with a tremor in her voice, "was a wicked story-teller. My name is Sharraton, and I see no opportunity whatever of changing it. I am on my way to Baden-Baden, and little thought, when I decided to stop here, that I should meet you. O Jack, dear Jack!" she added, with a piteous expression, "we have always been such good friends, do sit down and tell me what you mean?"

"Were you staying the other day at a private hotel in a street running out of Oxford Street, close by the Marble Arch?" I asked abruptly.

Her dove-like eyes were filled with reproach as she replied, "You know, Jack, that I was stopping at the Charing Cross Hotel."

"Then," I went on remorselessly, "it wasn't you I saw dining at the Café Regent?"

"Dining at the Café Regent! Oh no, Jack!" she said, with a supplicating gesture. "How can you think so. You also know that I met Captain Franklyn at the theatre, after dining by myself at the Charing Cross, and it was after the play that he took me to that horrible Tiptoff Club, where we met you, naughty boy. It was no fit place for either of us."

"Well, what does it all mean?" I said stubbornly. "Do you think that you have a double?"

Her answer staggered me. "Unfortunately, Jack, I'm afraid that I have. Believe me, that constantly for the last ten years some dreadful woman, very like me, has been seen under the most compromising conditions, in the most compromising places. This wretch has caused me the greatest sorrows of my life"—here she wiped her eyes with a lace pocket-handkerchief—"but how can I prevent her for being taken for me. You say that her name is Mrs Fortinbras. I sincerely thank you, my dear Jack, for having found out this much. It is what I have employed detectives for a long time to discover. Jack, if we were not in an hotel garden, and your friends were not watching us so curiously, I would get up and kiss you, as I used to do at Torquay. Tell me only that you trust me, Jack, and I shall be, not happy—I can never be so again—but greatly, very greatly relieved." She spoke these

words earnestly, with the tears rolling down her cheeks without furrowing their colour, for Mrs Sharraton, unlike Mrs Bottlestrap, evidently did not use cheap and coarse cosmetics. Most women do not improve their appearance when they weep, but the moisture, which trickled from Mrs Sharraton's lovely orbits, only increased their witchery. I was fairly undone, and surrendered *à discrétion*.

"Dear Mrs Sharraton," I whispered, bending towards her fragrant face—it smelt, I remember, of Ess bouquet—"please don't cry. I was a beast to think that you were the other woman; of course I believe you. Forgive me!"

"Jack, dear boy," she cooed softly, her tears vanishing like a sea-fret before the sun; "what need have you of forgiveness? You were mistaken, that is all. Now go back to your friends, and come and have tea with me between five and six, and tell me all about yourself. I can't listen now, for I have to write four or five important letters to catch the English post. *Au revoir!*"

And, kissing her hand, she tripped away, leaving me feeling extremely uncomfortable, for had I not wronged a sweet and unvengeful lady? I returned to my companions in a perturbed state of mind, for I had told Anthony Fuller all that I knew about the widow, when, as I supposed, we saw her in the company of Cornelius Flaherty *alias* Fortinbras.

"Hallo! Master Jack," said Carmichael, as I re-seated myself at his table. "You seem to have begun young, judging by the lamentations which that very fair dame showered on you. I trust that you have not broken the lady's heart; but I do not think so, because she left you all smiles, and I saw that

directly she got through that glass door she sent off a *diensman* or commissionaire, as you would call him in London, with a note already written. Who is she?"

"I've already told you," I answered, "she's a Mrs Sharraton. I have known her for several years, and I'm afraid I've done her an injustice." Then I told them the story of the Café Regent, the little hotel off Oxford Street, the Oxford Music Hall, the Tiptoff Club, and other events of that strange night, carefully omitting all reference to Tabby, or my success at the tables.

When I had finished, Cocky exclaimed, "By Jove! Bingo, you did go it." But Carmichael, putting up his "window-pane," as his cousin irreverently called his eyeglass, observed quietly: "Don't you think, Jack, it's a curious thing that Mrs Sharraton and Mr Flaherty-MacWashington should have arrived at this God-forsaken place almost simultaneously? I've heard of these mysterious doubles before. I know, at least, three highly respectable ladies, mixing in the best society, who have been as cruelly treated as your friend Mrs Sharraton. One fair creature offered a reward of one thousand pounds, if any one could give a clue to her dreaded double; the second brought an action for libel against a tittle-tattle paper, for stating that she was at Hamburg, when she swore, and proved it, that she was visiting her sister in Berkshire; and the third induced her husband to vindicate her honour at Ostend with a gossiping Captain in the Guards, who had asserted that he had seen her ladyship one night at Cremorne, when she was really nursing a sick brother in Kensington. The Captain had to leave his regiment, and the husband still walks with

a limp. All three ladies were washed white as ceilings which have just left the hands of the plasterer. But the big reward was all bogus, the Editor was robbed when he paid damages, the Captain ought not to have resigned his commission, and the husband ought not to be obliged to toddle about with two walking-sticks."

"Why?" I asked impetuously.

Mr Gerald Carmichael let fall his "window-pane," as he answered: "Simply and solely because these three virtuous women had no doubles. Neither has your friend Mrs Sharraton a female counterpart."

"Then you doubt her word?" I cried hotly.

"If I didn't, Jack Franklyn," he observed quietly, "I should doubt my own common-sense. From what you have said, I judge that your acquaintance, Anthony Fuller, would fully agree with my deduction."

"Well I don't," I retorted sulkily. "I've told Mrs Sharraton that I believed her, and I shall tell her so again, when I see her this evening."

"Oh! she's made an appointment, has she!" said Gerald Carmichael. "Good again! for the very best thing you can do is to reiterate your implicit belief in her assertion. Promise me that you will, and I shall be delighted."

"I swear I will!" I exclaimed enthusiastically.

Carmichael again hoisted his eye-glass, and after a calm survey of my flushed countenance, remarked coolly, "I'm very much afraid you'll be too impetuous for our trade. You'd better take up the Army, for you'd be sure to get the Victoria Cross for valour in presence of the enemy."

He said this with such a quizzical air that I could not help laughing, in which Cocky joined heartily, and we all then left the hotel in the highest good

humour. The *Chargé d'Affaires* took us to the Casino, the scene of his encounter with Lieutenant von Blauenblitz, and speedily had us enrolled as members, for any candidate, duly proposed and seconded by responsible members, had no ordeal by ballot to undergo, and as our seconder was none other than the Grand Duke's Master-huntsman, Freiherr von Taubeltof, esteemed to be the best-dressed nobleman in Saxe-Bingenstadt, our position was at once assured. Herr von Taubeltof, to whom we were of course presented, was a stout dark man of uncertain age with waxed moustaches. He assured us that he was more English than many subjects of Queen Victoria. "I speak English," he said proudly, "with, it is true, great correctness, but alas! a strong German accent. I ride English horses, I wear English garments, and I hope to marry an English Miss. Shake hands."

The London tailor who supplied the worthy Teuton with his clothes, must have worked off some of his very loudest patterns on the Grand-ducal-Master-Huntsman, for he wore a green and red tartan cut-away with brass buttons, a blue and white bird's-eye waistcoat with onyx buttons, and very tight gamboge-coloured cord trousers. On his head was a black velvet hunting cap with a gold tassel, and he also displayed a gold-headed Malacca crop, while heavy plated spurs adorned his patent leather boots. Altogether he made a very fine appearance, and, as Cocky observed, would have knocked our Master of the Buckhounds out of time. He was a most hospitable official, however, and at once placed three horses at our disposal, for an afternoon's ride in the Waldstrasse, as they called the forest lying outside the town walls. Remem-

bering my appointment with Mrs Sharraton, I had to decline, but Carmichael and Larkhall gladly accepted the offer, and I saw the party start on the Grand-ducal steeds before I wended my way back to the Bingenstadter Hof. The Casino, in which I subsequently spent so many pleasant hours, was a great brown stone building with immense rooms in it devoted to reading, writing, fencing, billiards, American bowls, cards, and, above all, dancing. There was no special smoking-room, for the fumes of tobacco made themselves evident everywhere. No vast sums had been spent either on decorations or furniture, and the table arrangements were of the simplest, but the prices were based on a co-operative basis, which would have delighted Lord Grey and his followers. A member would lunch well, if not luxuriously, for tenpence (English), and fare as well at dinner-time for a little less than twice that amount. And, moreover, the Casino was the one spot in Bingenstadt where the "vons" and "non-vons," and their families could meet on common ground. From the Grand Duke himself, down to the successful speculator in pickled cucumbers, the Casino was frequented by all sorts and conditions of men. I am afraid that such an institution would never succeed either in London or New York, where plutocracy—having swallowed aristocracy, as the Python at the Zoo once took in its protecting blanket—rules the roost; but in Bingenstadt any respectable person, were he prince or simple burgher, foreign envoy or foreign student, was made free, if answering to the necessary qualifications of this well-conducted institution. I have digressed somewhat on this subject, because I have always felt what a pity it is that similar clubs are not established in the large towns of Great

Britain—London being impossible. Outside of the Casino the “vons” and the “non-vons” split up into their distinct camps; but within its walls they mingled with a familiarity which never bred contempt on either side.

On arriving at the hotel, I was immediately shown up to Mrs Sharraton's sitting-room, without even asking for her by name. A waiter was looking out for me in the hall. She was not, however, on view when I arrived, but immediately afterwards emerged from some curtains covering a side portal. She was clad in what I suppose would nowadays be called a tea-gown of soft white silk, with a sash of her favourite rose-pink round her waist. Her beautiful hair flowed down her back carelessly, confined by a ribbon of the same hue as her sash. In the subdued light caused by the green Venetian blinds, she did not look more than two or three and twenty. There may have been some more of the hue aforesaid on her skin, but there was not a wrinkle round her lustrous eyes. I have since ascertained that Mrs Sharraton dispelled possible “crow's feet” by a very simple process, and, as it may be of service to some of my lady readers (if I have any), I give her recipe here, as she wrote it down many years after this meeting. Here it is: “Knead the eyelids, temples, and cheeks, every morning and evening for a quarter of an hour with a pint of cold distilled water, into which has been mixed a tablespoonful of Californian borax.” Having published this fact, I feel that I am of more advantage to beauty in distress than any knight-errant of old. Mrs Sharraton's greeting was of the impulsive order.

“Jack! dear boy!” she cried softly; “when I saw you this morning I told you that I could kiss you.

Well, now, I am going to do so." And she flung her arms round my neck.

There was a strange similarity between Mrs Sharraton's embrace and that of Tabby in the cab, when we were returning to Mrs Bottlestrap's hotel, and, ingrate that I was, I could not help wishing that my fair hostess had been the other one. Tabby had excited my passion, Mrs Sharraton only raised in my mind a hope that her osculation would not be a repetition of Mrs Bottlestrap's tinted adieu, when I was carried off to school by the Wicked Uncle.

Mrs Sharraton evidently perceived my unreadiness to respond, for, dropping her hands, she exclaimed with a deep sigh: "Ah, Jack! you're like most of the men, cold to those who love you, and hot to those who don't. Well, I'd better order up tea." She rang the bell, and we were presently discussing a beverage which may have been called Bohea, but which, more probably, was decocted from leaves gathered in the hedges of the Fatherland.

"And now, Jack," said Mrs Sharraton, "I want to know if you have seen your great-aunt, Miss MacWashington."

"No, indeed," I exclaimed. "I've never seen her, nor heard from her, since George and I left her house: but, of course, I was told that she had married that brute Flaherty."

"Flaherty!" repeated Mrs Sharraton. "I seem to know the name."

"He used to be our tutor at Bath, and now, curiously enough, he has turned up here—for no good, I expect, because——" here I stopped abruptly, for I remembered my promise to Carmichael.

"Yes, yes," said Mrs Sharraton, persuasively. "Go on, Jack; what is your reason?"

"Because," I replied, with a desperate plunge, "his wife, my old aunt, isn't with him."

Mrs Sharraton gave me a peculiar look, as much as to say, "That wasn't your first idea, Master Jack." I could see the distrust in her eyes just as plainly as if it had passed through her pretty lips. Then she said, "You shouldn't judge people too harshly, Jack. This Mr Flaherty may be going to meet his wife at one of the watering-places round about."

"I don't think that's very likely," I blurted out, "from what I heard just before I left England."

"And what was it you heard?" she asked, with a coquettish smile; "nothing very dreadful, I hope."

"Only," I said, "that Aunt Penelope was trying to get a divorce from him." The moment I had let slip this piece of information, I could have bitten my tongue out for having made the revelation. Mrs Sharraton looked confused for a few seconds, and, if I did not believe it to be impossible, I should have said that she changed colour.

"Now, really, Jack," she said, "this is a very grave piece of news concerning your aunt, because it affects you greatly."

"How can it affect me?" I asked. "I've nothing to do with Aunt Penelope's love affairs."

"You think so, perhaps," replied Mrs Sharraton, "but, as a matter of fact, if your great-aunt should die unmarried, you will, by your grandfather's will, inherit all her property; but if she should, at the time of her death, have a husband, he will be her heir. Now, if she be divorced, she will be unmarried, and have no husband; consequently, you will succeed."

I felt quite staggered by this information. I did not know what to say, nor did it cross my mind to

ask Mrs Sharraton where she had picked up the intelligence; so, by way of making some sort of observation, I said, "What about George, then?"

"George," answered Mrs Sharraton, "is not even mentioned in this part of the will."

"Well, supposing that Flaherty and myself were both dead, who would get the money after my aunt?"

"Your very distant cousins, the Dundas-Mac-Washingtons," she exclaimed quickly.

I perceived that Mrs Sharraton had got somehow or another very precise data with regard to the great Ambassador's testamentary disposition.

"And now, Jack," continued Mrs Sharraton, more sweetly than ever, "please tell me who it was who told you about this divorce business, for you know, dear boy, that in these cases there must always be"—she hesitated—"another woman," she faltered, casting her eyes down, and looking as innocent as a French *ingénue*. "Who was your informant?"

I made no reply.

"Well," said Mrs Sharraton, "as you won't tell me, I will tell you. It was that dangerous wretch, Anthony Fuller."

I fell headlong into the trap, and exclaimed: "How do you know that?"

Mrs Sharraton displayed her pearly teeth, while a triumphant look darted from her half-closed lids. "Never mind, Jack, never mind! There are little birds who can whisper the truth, as well as little birds who can chirrup falsehood. And now, what is the name of the woman with whom Master Fuller coupled this Flaherty?"

"He never mentioned any woman at all," I replied boldly. The fact being that it was I who had put him

on to Mrs Sharraton's "double," all the while believing her to be the charming personage who was now squeezing me like an orange.

"He mentioned no woman at all!" repeated Mrs Sharraton, incredulously. "Are you quite sure, Jack?"

"I'll give you my word of honour, take my dying oath, and bet you a sovereign that he didn't," I cried, relapsing into a confirmation of veracity very much in vogue at Eton.

Mrs Sharraton was evidently impressed by my demeanour, and with a gentle sigh of relief, said softly: "After all, Jack, the matter does not concern me in the least, but knowing your interests to be at stake, I should like to know that they are properly safeguarded. If I were you, I should try and find out from Anthony Fuller the name of the lady whom he suspects." She spoke to me as calmly as if the Margate episode had never occurred.

When I considered whither Anthony's suspicions tended, thanks to my mistake at the Café Regent, I nearly burst out laughing, but I restrained myself, and merely said, "Of course I will."

"If you should discover it," said Mrs Sharraton gravely, "let me know—write to Torquay, the letter will be forwarded. And now, dear boy, I must ask you to leave me. I have a thousand little things to do, especially letters to write. I shall leave for Baden-Baden to-morrow afternoon by the four o'clock express, so I hope you will come and have an *au revoir* breakfast with me in the garden at half-past twelve. Till then, Jack, Heaven bless you!"—and she bent forward and kissed me, but not with the effusion of her first greeting.

I sauntered back to Major Pickelstein's abode, musing over Mrs Sharraton's communication. I could plainly see that by the divorce being made good against Flaherty, I should stand in his shoes, and—good God! the horrible truth rose to my brain!—if he should be undivorced, and Aunt Penelope and I were both out of the way, he would be the sole heir to her fortune, which, if not great, was considerably more than mediocre. But, though I knew Flaherty was a bully, I did not think that he possessed courage enough to attempt murder, or incite it. Besides, what proof had I that Mrs Sharraton's story was true? Flaherty's presence in Bingenstadt was purely a fluke—the Grand-ducal capital was the junction for lines of railway going east, west, north, and south. A man who had quarrelled with his wife was very likely to select a central spot, whence he could beat a retreat at a moment's notice. However, I resolved to consult Gerald Carmichael at the earliest opportunity.

When I got back to the Major's, I found that Lark-hall had not returned from his ride, so I proceeded to unpack my clothes, and set in order the limited space at my disposal. I took off my coat and waistcoat, and worked in my shirt and trousers, and soon had got things, as the Wicked Uncle would say, "ship-shape." I was going to resume my garments, when I remembered the brown-paper parcel in the inner pocket of my vest, and thought it would be a good opportunity to transfer my famous Tiptoff Club winnings to a wash-leather pocket-book with a key, which I had bought before leaving London, but had never been able to fill with my gains till now. As I spread the crisp bank-notes on the table, I recalled the scene at the roulette table, and I could not help wondering why Uncle

Philip had never made any enquiries on the subject, and also why Anthony had only made a casual allusion to my luck. I was counting the "flimsies" when the door opened behind me, and an only too familiar voice exclaimed, "So I've not drrawn blank this time!" Of course it was Flaherty.

His eyes fastened greedily on the money. "Be jabbers!" he exclaimed, "did ye rrob the Bank of England, Master Jack, beforre ye left London?"

I coloured up. "No," I said haltingly, "I'm just going to put it in the bank here."

"A most wise rresolution, Jack," said Flaherty, "but before ye do so, might I crave, as your only rrelative in this town, to claim the favourr of a small loan—five, ten, or what pounds ye can spare—till me rremittance arrives from home?"

"Will twenty pounds do?" I asked, feeling very annoyed, not at his demand, but at his seeing my wealth.

"Make it five-and-twenty, Jack," he said, "and that'll be even cash."

I handed him five five-pound notes, which he clutched with the voracity of a hyena.

"May the Pope bless you, Jack!" he shouted; "now I'll be off to melt this beforre thim thaves of money-changers be closed." And he rushed out, leaving me to make my transfer in no amiable frame of mind.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

MORE MYSTERIES.

CHARLIE LARKHALL did not return till late in the evening. After supper, I spent most of my time in conversing with the matronly, but blushing, Frau Pickelstein, much to the annoyance of Herr Krap, who hovered about us like a sheep-dog in charge of a flock of Southdowns. Frau Pickelstein, so she told me, was very interested in England and the English, but for aught she knew about my native country it might have been at the Antipodes.

"Are there any apples in your fatherland?" she asked with her usual shy simper.

"Apples!" I said, "why, we feed the pigs on them, and as to grapes, melons, peaches, and pine-apples, there are none so fine to be found in the whole of Europe."

Both these assertions were true, for all the "fallers" at the various farms where I had stayed in my early youth, went to the pig-styes, and I did not think it necessary to state that the grapes, melons, peaches, and pine-apples were grown under glass.

"*Wunderschön!*" cried Frau Pickelstein, "and have you also fish?"

"Fish!" I echoed with a smile which would have done credit to Anthony Fuller, "we have so much fish that the poor people refuse to eat it." This again was strictly true.

"And game?" went on my hostess, most of whose questions turned upon stomachic pleasures.

"Game!" I repeated, "why, we think nothing of killing hundreds of partridges, pheasants, and grouse in a single day."

"*Wunderbar!*" cried Frau Pickelstein, "I should greatly delight to live in your much-to-be-sought-for land."

Herr Krap here ventured to put in a caustic shot. "Mr Franklyn," he said with a grimace, "have you ever read the 'Adventures of Baron Munchausen'?"

"Often," I replied, perceiving his drift, "I believe that it was written by a German."

Kraps dried up, the more so as Frau Pickelstein, in a very severe voice, desired him to go and fetch her a pint of camomile water from the Apotheke. Kraps retired on his mission slowly but not sullenly. He cast a reproachful glance at the goddess of his admiration, but she did not deign to look at him.

When we were *tête-à-tête*, she said in a dulcet tone, which Mrs Sharraton could not have equalled: "And Mr Franklyn, say, do you not love——" She paused, I trembled, because I thought she might say "me," but she quickly relieved my mind by adding "Dublin stout? Ach Himmel! it is so frightfully dear in Bingenstadt."

"Madam," I said gallantly, "I worship that liquor, and, if it is to be procured in this beast-beauteous city, permit me to lay two dozen bottles at your feet to-morrow."

"You overwhelm me with kindness," murmured the fair Frau; "but kindly send it in by the garden gate, as my husband does not drink this beverage, and, Heaven knows why, is disposed to be—jealous."

In parenthesis I may state that a more complacent, easy-going man than Major Pickelstein never

existed, but his spouse's romantic mind could even weave poetry about Guinness's brewery.

"Madam," I exclaimed, "be assured that your gallant husband shall never have reason to suspect John MacWashington Franklyn."

"Thank you, thank you!" murmured Frau Pickelstein. "But hush! here comes Herr Kraps with the camomile water wherewithal to relieve my distressed liver."

Perhaps my speeches were rather high pitched for a boy of eighteen, but then, as ever afterwards, when talking to Frau Pickelstein, I drew liberally upon certain mediæval dramas, which I had commenced at dear old Magoy's. Hearing Larkhall's voice calling for Fritz in the hall, I begged Frau Pickelstein to excuse me, and left the dutiful Kraps supplying her with a large glass of what certainly may have been camomile water, but whereof the odour was rather that of the juniper berry used in the manufacture of Holland's gin.

Cocky was in the highest spirits. He said that he and Jerry Carmichael had had a splendid ride in the Waldstrasse Forest, and that Freiherr von Taubeltorf had invited us all to join in a *Schnitzel-jagdt*, or paper-chase on horseback, to be held on that day week. Of course he had accepted for me. "And," he continued, "I've got another invitation for you to-night, and that is to go and have supper — never mind if you had your chickens and stewed plums — at Count Kromesky's. So we'll slip into our go-to-dining togs as quickl^r as we can. Jerry's going to be there."

Half-an-hour afterwards we were driving to the Russian Minister's house, one of the best dwellings in Bingenstadt, and shortly afterwards we were handing our overcoats to a gigantic Cossack in uniform, who received us at the hall door.

"Don't leave your *gibus*, Jack," whispered Cocky. "It's the custom here to pretend that you've only looked in to pass the word and hook it."

Led by an irreproachable flunkey, we passed through a brilliantly-lighted corridor to a white-and-gold door, where our conductor handed us over to a gentleman with several decorations, who was, I thought at first glance, the Muscovite Envoy himself. But when he flung open the door and proclaimed our names, or words corresponding thereto, I gathered that this magnifico was the major-domo of the household. The *salon* into which we were ushered was lighted with hundreds of wax candles; the cream and gold furniture was upholstered with pale blue damask; costly exotics were displayed in porcelain *jardinières*, rare china reposed in Buhl cabinets, and exquisite pictures, most of them English water-colours by the first masters, hung on the walls, faintly tinted with azure. I was very greatly surprised at this splendour, but was prevented from any examination of the many lovely objects which I saw around me, by Gerald Carmichael stepping forward and saying, "Permit me, Count, to present to you my countrymen, Lord Charles Larkhall, and Mr John MacWashington Franklyn."

He spoke to a little dark-whiskered man with a broad red ribbon across his shirt front, who rushed forward, tore our crush-hats from our hands, and giving them to the major-domo, cried in excellent English: "Gentlemen, you are most welcome to my house; I hope to see you here as often as it pleases you to come! Allow me to make you acquainted with my wife, and my niece, Princess Pauline Rabanoff."

And in a trice we were making obeisance to a hand-

some but rather faded dark lady in white satin, glittering with diamonds, and a pretty round-faced snub-nosed young girl, whose fair hair was twisted round and round her head. In her green dress, embroidered with silver, she looked like a very dainty, and not unsubstantial, fairy. I may here mention that Charlie Larkhall fell in love with Princess Pauline on the spot. But of course I could not tell this on the present occasion, though I did notice that his eyes were generally fixed on the Russian damsel's merry countenance.

"And now to supper!" cried the Count, "Lord Charles, will you lead the way with my niece; Mr Franklyn and I will follow; Mr Carmichael and the Countess will be the rear guard." We entered an oak-panelled chamber, hung with oil paintings, and decorated here and there with suits of armour, which shone like silver in the light of as many candles as there were in the adjacent apartment. Six round tables were laid with four *couverts* apiece. The Count invited Charlie Larkhall and Princess Pauline to sit at one of the tables, while he, the Countess, Carmichael, and I took our places at another hard by.

"You will wonder, perhaps, my dear Mr Franklyn," said the Count, as we were served with some appetising Bisque soup, "how it happens that you see so many tables laid for so few guests. Let me be frank with you. Every night my dining-room is so arranged, and I have specially introduced these same little tables in order that jollity may be the order of the night. But alas! in preparing these, my little supper parties, I did not count upon the opposition of a Great Personage. He apparently

objects to supper parties at the Russian Legation, and if this Great Personage at Berlin says 'No,' then the little personages at Bingenstadt must say 'No' too, even though their mouths be watering for some of this real *caviare*, which I highly recommend to your approval. And with the excellent Bingenstadters I suffer too, my wife suffers, and my niece suffers; but my colleague, Carmichael, consoles me. I trust that you and your friend, Lord Charles, will also be Good Samaritans."

I could only murmur some stupid expression of delight.

"This dish," continued the Count, when the next course arrived, "is probably new to you. It is a sterlet from one of my estates in Russia—a fish, I fancy, not so plentiful as whitebait at Greenwich. Talking of Greenwich, I remember a *bon-mot* of your talented grandfather, Lord Mac-Washington, at a diplomatic dinner given at the Ship Hotel. There was some preparation of salmon with *sauce tartare*. The fool of a waiter had left this relish by my side without my knowledge. Count Biflaremmé, the French First Secretary of Embassy, who was sitting next to me, called out, 'Where is ze anchovy?' 'I don't know,' said Lord Mac-Washington, 'but if you'll scratch your neighbour, the Russian, you'll find the Tartar sauce.' I was only a just-fledged *attaché* at the time, and felt very uncomfortable.' Ah!" continued the Count, "like most Russians I love the English, but, unfortunately, the English are bred up to distrust us. To them there is always present the Russian bugbear. But remember, my dear Mr Franklyn, that Russia will never willingly go to war with England. You will understand,

preparing for diplomacy: remember what I tell you. It is a peg on which you may, in years to come, hang up a good many Continental treaties, which seem to menace Great Britain. But we are not here to talk politics, but to enjoy ourselves. My dear colleague," he cried to Carmichael, "Mr Franklyn and myself challenge you and Lord Charles to a game at bowls. My wife and Pauline will mark, I am sure; so we shall be quite to ourselves!"

"Right you are, Count," returned Carmichael, and presently we were in the American bowling alley, a superbly fitted lounge at the end of the garden. We had some most enjoyable games, into which the Countess and her niece entered with great zest, merrily betting small sums on either side, the while smoking their cigarettes. I felt quite sorry to go, when Carmichael suggested that it was time for Bedfordshire, and I know that Charlie Larkhall's sorrow exceeded mine, when we bade good-night to our kind hosts and their pretty niece.

"It seems to me," said Cocky, as we walked down the hill, "that these Russians are more like English folk than any other Continentals."

"You're quite right, Charlie," observed Carmichael. "Wherever I've been, I've always found the Russians the pleasantest companions. Most of them have had English nurses, English governesses, and English tutors. They learn to speak English better than their mother-tongue, and they look upon English gentlemen and English gentlewomen as models to be copied by all polite society. Nay, more, if they have no Orthodox Church of their own in any foreign town, they always attend the Church of England service. Next Sunday morning, if you go to the Old Castle Chapel, where

our chaplain holds forth, you'll be certain to find Countess Kromesky and Princess Pauline."

"By Jove!" cried Charlie Larkhall, "and there you'll be certain to find me. I've always made a point of going to church on Sundays for many years, haven't I, Bingo?"

"Yes," I said, very much amused at Cocky's enthusiasm, "and not only on Sundays. What about the twenty-eighth day of the month?"

"What's that?" asked Jerry Carmichael.

"Only on that day," broke in Charlie, before I could speak, "there's a particularly jolly psalm with chorus, 'For His mercy endureth for ever,' set to a rousing tune. Of course we used to make the rafters ring with it, but, unfortunately, when we got to the end of it, and the boys would shout 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, for His mercy endureth for ever,' the Provost had the rattling old air changed to one as melancholy as that of 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept.' A cruel shame, for nobody joined in the coalbox afterwards."

As we were laughing at Cocky's reminiscences of psalmody, we reached the corner of the Great Platz, where Carmichael, after telling us to look him up in the morning, turned off to go to his apartments. Just after we had parted from him, a carriage with luggage on the top rumbled by.

"Some one going to catch the Cologne express at midnight," observed Charlie.

A gas lamp momentarily illumined the interior of the vehicle, and I recognised in one of the occupants none other than my esteemed great-uncle by marriage, Mr Cornelius Flaherty MacWashington, Count, Viscount, and Prince of his own creation. His companion

was a female, but she was so closely veiled that, even had the glimpse lasted longer, I could not possibly have seen her features. I decided inwardly that my ex-tutor was engaged on some amorous expedition at my expense.

The next morning I went to keep my appointment with Mrs Sharraton at the Bingenstadter Hof, but, greatly to my astonishment, I was told by the porter, who seemed a pompous ass, that the lady whom I had visited on the previous day had suddenly departed in the evening, leaving a pencilled note for me. It ran as follows :—

MY EVER DEAR JACK,—Since seeing you to-day, I have received a telegram from my cousins at Baden-Baden, asking me to join them *at once*, as they are going on to Lucerne and Como. I cannot but comply with their request, as I am to be their *guest*. Would I were rich and *my own mistress*, but alas ! I was born to be a *dependent*. I *bitterly* regret not having seen you again, but *que faire ?* God bless you, Jack. Take care of yourself, and think sometimes of your old and *loving* friend,

MINNIE ALICE SHARRATON.

P.S.—Be sure and let me know if you learn *anything* from A. F., but *don't trust him*. *He would ruin any woman's reputation*. *Burn this*.

This epistle caused certain doubts to arise in my mind, but they were speedily dispelled.

“Did Mrs Sharraton go away alone?” I asked the porter.

“Oh, yes, sir ! quite alone,” he answered “She did not even have a *madchen* mit her. She were in a great hurrican.”

“Did any one call to see Mrs Sharraton while she was here ?” I asked.

“I beg bardon, sir,” said the porter. “Who did you name ?”

“Mrs Sharraton,” I retorted angrily ; “the lady we’re talking about.”

“I know her not,” he said with a snort ; “zee for your-

THE SCARLET CITY

self," and he opened the Visitors' Book. I ran my finger down the list; there was no Mrs Sharraton on it.

"Dat is your vriend," observed the porter, smiling maliciously, as he pointed to the inscription, undoubtedly written by Mrs Sharraton, for I knew her penmanship, "Alice Smith, London." "You mistake her name, honoured sir," said the porter.

I could have kicked him down the steps, but instead of doing so, I flung him a gulden and rushed off to try and find Gerald Carmichael. I had not gone ten yards from the Bingenstadter Hof before I saw, on the other side of the Square, Mr Flaherty striding along with a seven-inch cigar in his mouth. I hastily turned down a side street. Two problems now puzzled me. (1) Why should Mrs Sharraton sign herself "Alice Smith" in the hotel book, as she probably used to do in early days at Torquay? (2) How came it about that Flaherty, whom I had seen driving to the station with a pile of luggage, should have suddenly returned to Bingenstadt? These were mysteries to be added to those which I was vainly trying to unravel.

I found Gerald Carmichael at his rooms. He begged me to give him half-an-hour to himself, as he was drawing up a most important despatch on the condition of the vineyards in Saxe-Bingenstadt. "Of course this ought to be done by our Consul at Freifast," he said; "but he is a lazy devil, and I *must* fill the F. O. bag with something. When old Laburnum was here, we never wanted for packages, socks, which Lady Matilda had knitted for her nephews, china pipes for Laburnum's brother, potted wild boar for his sister, and so on; but I'm conscientious, and having no relatives who appreciate these luxuries, I make it a rule to send a certain amount of MS. wherewithal to block the pigeon holes

in Downing Street." And he set to work on his ruled foolscap, with the ardour and energy of a man who is deciding the fate of empires.

While he was writing I amused myself with endeavouring to read Boccaccio. My success was very small. Here and there I construed a word familiar to me by reason of its Latin origin, but I was very glad when Carmichael flung down his pen, folded up his work, and placed it in a huge official envelope, which he sealed with a great blotch of wax.

"There !" he said enthusiastically, "there are statistics to be included in any Blue Book on viti-culture !" *

"Where did you get them from ?" I asked.

"From my wine merchant," replied Carmichael. "I have led him to believe that the British Navy will in future be provided with the wholesome wines of Saxe-Bingenstadt, in preference to the pernicious rum of Jamaica. I have recommended the change, moreover, to the Foreign Secretary, but I fear me that the Lords of the Admiralty will never come to know of it." He sighed heavily, and drew his fingers through his hair. "And now, Jack Franklyn, what can I do for you ? I am not surprised to see you alone, because Charlie Larkhall has gone up to the Russian Legation to play croquet with Princess Pauline."

"Do you think he admires her ?" I asked.

"Of course I do," returned Carmichael, laughing. "He's like a cat after cream ; but he's a young cat, and cream often turns sour. In five or six years' time we might take the matter *au grand sérieux*, and it wouldn't be a bad match for Cocky, as you call him, for Princess Pauline is an only daughter, and an heiress to mines in the Oural Mountains and vast forests in Little Russia, to

say nothing of a palace as big as Windsor Castle on the Sea of Azov. But to your business!" he added abruptly.

In a lame sort of way I related all my interview with Mrs Sharraton, the visit of Flaherty to my room, the apparition of the carriage with luggage, after I had parted from him in the Grand Platz. I showed him Mrs Sharraton's note, and I told of my recognition of Flaherty but a short while since.

Carmichael listened attentively, and took a note now and again in a tiny pocket-book. When I had finished, he paused before he spoke. Then he said—"I am afraid that your friend, Mrs Sharraton, has, in turf slang, been nobbled. I am also well assured that she does not speak the truth, though possibly there may be some foundation for her story about your grandfather's will; but that she has left out some important details I am certain. I have written to your Uncle Philip. You must write to some one else, and he is this Mr Anthony Fuller. Why he should be busying himself in this affair I know not, but evidently Mrs Sharraton is afraid of him."

"Why should Mrs Sharraton be afraid of him?" I cried. "She has a 'double,' and Anthony, through my foolishness, is on the wrong scent."

"Don't be too sure," said Carmichael drily. "I disagree with your theory about 'doubles,' and so, I think, would Mr Fuller if he heard——"

"But I can't believe," I broke in hotly, "that Mrs Sharraton, whom I have known for years, would do anything to injure me. Why should she tell me about this will?"

"Why should she know anything about it?" retorted Carmichael with an unmoved countenance. "And why, again, should she register herself at the Bingenstadter

Hof as Alice Smith? It is bad logic to answer one question with another, but conundrums of this kind are best hung up by their tails, like pheasants, in the same larder. We must wait till they drop. Then they'll be ready for dissection. Meantime, I'll keep my eye on Flaherty."

At this moment our conversation was disturbed by Charlie Larkhall bursting into the room, holding two pieces of pasteboard in his hand.

"Here's a lark, Bingo!" he cried. "I thought I'd find you here or at the Casino. We're asked by Prince and Princess Adalbert of Saxe-Bingenstadt to attend—that's what kills me—a juvenile party at the Stone Palace next Tuesday. And Hofmarshal Graf von Liebergren, in a foot-note, specially draws attention to the fact that we must wear white chokers and evening dress, or uniform! By Jove! I wish I'd got my old Eton volunteer tunic, I'd astonish them. What do you say; shall we go?"

"Of course you will go," said Gerald Carmichael. "It is a high honour for Princess Adalbert to have invited you. You needn't sneer at the entertainment, Charlie, because it's called a Juvenile Party. I shall be there, Count Kromesky will be there, Princess Pauline, and, as I learn from this letter, which I have just received, the Duke of Middlesex and his charming young daughter, Lady Beatrice Belleisle."

"Lady Beatrice Belleisle!" I ejaculated with a tremble in my voice.

"Yes," said Carmichael. "Do you know her?"

"Only by sight," I replied. "I travelled in the same train with her and the Duke from Cologne."

"Well," said Carmichael, "on Tuesday you and she shall be better acquainted. Let's go to the Casino and have a game of billiards!" I went with them, thrilling with an unknown joy.

CHAPTER *AT THE STONE PALACE* TWENTIETH

THE Stone Palace inhabited by Prince and Princess Adalbert of Saxe-Bingenstadt was at once the admiration and the envy of the natives. They admired the brand new comfort of the Heir Apparent's residence, which contrasted so strongly with the grim old Schloss where the Grand Duke dwelt; but they also resented the fact that this up-to-date mansion had been paid for by Princess Adalbert's parents, and was indeed her wedding present. "There were plenty of empty palaces," murmured the Bingenstadters; "why could not the Princess be content to occupy one of them, as had been done by the heirs to the Grand ducal throne for generations past?"

Princess Adalbert paid but little attention to these grumblers, very justly remarking that as they were not asked to contribute directly or indirectly one *pfennig* to the building of her home, she and her husband intended to please themselves. A more amiable lady than Princess Adalbert never lived. She was the soul of good nature, very sympathetic and very charitable, but she did not like being taken advantage of even in small matters. For instance, discovering that the High Court grocer was not on a par with Cæsar's wife in respect of his wares, she transferred her custom

to an English tea-monger at Freistadt, a city outside of the frontier posts of Saxe-Bingenstadt. Again, when the Princess found out that her guests never failed to fill their boxes with the wax matches distributed about the house, she speedily cured the petty larceny by providing others which lighted only on the box. Once, having been accused by some leading members of the Lutheran Church of favouring the very broad views of the pernicious Dr Strauss, she ostentatiously invited that reformer to visit her at the Stone Palace. With the petty pride of the "vons" she had no patience, and unofficially delighted in seeking the society of cultured and pleasant "non-vons," but of course, as far as court ceremonial was concerned, she was powerless, and the wives of most of the Grand Duke's Cabinet Ministers, and many high officials, sighed in vain to enter the paradise presided over by that great lady, Madame de la Creuse. In short, Princess Adalbert was looked upon as a highly dangerous personage by the "vons," and they trembled to think of the deluge which would submerge them when Prince Adalbert succeeded his uncle. But though they did not dare to openly show their resentment, they were constantly making attacks on this august lady, sometimes behind her back, sometimes in the "von" organ, *Der Bingenstadter*. On one occasion I remember a well-known Correspondent passed through the city, and was entertained at dinner by Gerald Carmichael. The *littérateur* was much struck with the drowsy dignity of Bingenstadt, and penned a light article for an English magazine, in which the idiosyncrasies of the leading inhabitants, together with the general depression of the Haupt-und-Residenz-Stadt were set forth with a masterful

pen. Naturally, the satire was translated into German, and caused a storm of execration among the "vons." Carmichael was openly accused of being the author of this infamous libel, and it was broadly hinted that Princess Adalbert had supplied him with much of the information. The Grand Duke heard with trepidation of this social insurrection, and finally a notice had to be inserted in the Official Gazette, denying that the British *Charge d'Affaires* was responsible for the article, or that it had been inspired in very High Quarters, for the very good reason that the real writer (at Carmichael's request) had sent him (not caring twopence for the Bingenstadters or their wrath) a letter, avowing that he, and he only, had penned the odious monograph. But for the inside of a week there were fearsome mutterings, and it was only when the Grand Duke had distributed two score of crosses of the Order of the Golden Duck of Bingenstadt, and that of Boleslaus the Belligerent, that the "vons" were, in appearance at least, appeased. Carmichael wrote a long despatch on the subject to the Foreign Office, and Count Krqmesky was so tickled with the whole business, that he engaged a French company to perform *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein* at the Russian-Legation, the public performance of which sparkling operetta was strictly forbidden at all theatres—there were only two by the way—in the Grand Ducal dominions. And the "vons" were terribly angry when Prince and Princess Adalbert not only accepted the Muscovite Envoy's invitation, but laughed heartily at the quaint conceits of the witty libretto.

The Children's Party at the Stone Palace was timed to commence at four o'clock, just before which hour Cocky Larkhall, who swore horribly at being "rigged

up like a waiter in broad daylight," and myself had left the Pickelstein mansion in an open droscky, being viewed with great admiration by Frau Pickelstein and all the little Pickelsteins, and with gloomy *nonchalance* by Herr Kraps. The Major was, as usual, attending to his human-equine duties. On arrival at the Palace, we were ushered into a pleasant garden. Princess Adalbert was receiving her guests, who ranged from gray-haired generals down to flaxen-haired urchins, and from limping grandmamas to granddaughters who could scarcely toddle. Larkhall and I made profound bows as we passed the Princess, and then mingled with the crowd. This being quite a "von" reception, the guests were most aristocratic, only the official "non-vons," without their spouses, being present. There was a band of musicians in a kiosque, and on the lawn several games of croquet were being played by uniformed officers and civilians in evening garb, and matrons and maids of all ages. Under a clump of lime trees there was a marquee, at which refreshments were served out, *Maitrank*, coffee, tea, ices, and cakes.

"Well, I'm blowed if I can stand much of this!" remarked Larkhall, after he had been looking at the croquet players for about a quarter of an hour. "I wonder what Reggie Gregory would say, if he saw us now, in white chokers, white gloves, and swallow-tails, doing the heavy at Her Royal Highness's macaroon feast. I wish Hills and Saunders were here to take our photos."

While Cocky was grumbling, we were joined by Carmichael, looking very spruce in his blue uniform. "Hallo, lads!" he cried, "you don't look very gay. They're just beginning to dance in the Orangery.

Let me find you a partner apiece," and, taking us by the arms, he drew us to a brick and glass building at the far end of the garden. "The Princess," he observed, "wishes to make the personal acquaintance of you both presently; meantime, you must show the natives that you know how to use your toes."

"That's easily done, without any dancing," observed Cocky, grimly; but his expression changed entirely when his cousin exclaimed—

"You're in luck, Charlie; there are the Kromeskys, with Princess Pauline looking prettier than ever. Go and ask her to give you this polka."

Cocky did not want to be told twice, and in less than no time he and the fair Russian were tripping it merrily round the parquet floor.

"And Fortune smiles on you too, Jack," said Carmichael gaily, "for here are the Duke of Middlesex and Lady Beatrice Belleisle, to whom I promised to present you."

Before I well knew what I was about, I was bowing, and scraping acquaintance with the father of the Maiden of the Coral Hand.

"I beg to present to your Grace," said Carmichael, "Mr John MacWashington Franklyn, eldest grandson of Lord MacWashington, who was such an ornament to my profession."

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the Duke, "you don't say so! Glad to meet you, Mr Franklyn. Never knew your grandfather had any grandchildren. Follow in his footsteps, my young friend; you can't do better! Beatty," he said, turning to the fairy in white, "this is Mr MacWashington Franklyn."

"Oh! I know him, papa," said the fairy.

"Know him?" ejaculated the Duke, while I stood blushing before them.

"Yes, papa, by sight. Mr Franklyn made the winning hit for us at Lords, and, don't you remember, we saw him at Cologne railway station!" she said eagerly.

"God bless my soul!" cried the Duke, "you don't say so." His Grace, I may mention in parenthesis, was always surprised by the simplest information. "I congratulate you, Mr Franklyn, but I could not recognise a modern Etonian in your present attire; might have done when I was a boy, but nowadays it's tomfoolery."

The Duke, who had a quarter of a million pounds income per annum, was a great Radical, though a Knight of the Garter.

"Well, your Grace, if I might suggest it," put in Carmichael, "I should say that Lady Beatrice and Jack Franklyn should join the dancers."

"Quite right, Mr Carmichael," observed the Duke sagely. "There's nothing like muscular exercise for promoting good health. Go along, young people, go along, and trip the light fantastic to your heart's content!"

Lady Beatrice placed her little hand on my arm, and we moved away, as the Duke exclaimed for the third time, "God bless my soul! you don't say so," but to what he referred, I was not in the least bit curious to know. All I felt was a kind of devotional awe for the fairy, who hung on my coat sleeve. I could see her then, as I can see her now, on the top of the coach at Lords, praying for our success, and going back yet further, I could see her, as I can see her now, pale, dishevelled, and lifeless, when I brought

her out the river at Monkey Island. But Lady Beatrice had none of my sentiment! Girls of fifteen are much more practical than lads of eighteen.

"Oh, Mr Franklyn!" she said sweetly, "I am so glad to meet you, and to thank you."

I stammered, my thoughts reverting to the rescue—"Thank me—what for, Lady Beatrice?"

"Because you won me two dozen pairs of gloves by your plucky play at Lords."

This was rather a come down to my romance. Was Lady Beatrice's prayer solely inspired by the desire to win gloves? Perish the idea!

"And you see, Mr Franklyn," continued the fairy, "although I was so surprised, I knew you at once, when we met at Cologne. I hope you dance as well as you play cricket? Now, my cousin, Harry Tapchester is a dreadful dancer. He nearly broke the little toe of my right foot last Christmas, but I forgave him, because I'm very fond of Harry."

I felt that if Harry Tapchester were to appear before us, I should have his blood. As the band struck up one of Güngl's inimitable measures, we glided into the arena. I flatter myself that I have always been able to dance fairly well. I have successfully steered the most impossible partners through the mazes of a thronged London ball-room, but never have I so realised the sense of Terpsichorean poetry, as I did on this occasion. Lady Beatrice felt, as I did, the exquisite rhythm of the music, for a high-class German band (I do not refer to the Teutonic minstrels of our ~~getters~~ ^{gutters}) knows how to modulate its harmony in such exquisite fashion that music and motion are blended together in a way unknown to most British ball-goers.

"Bravo! bravo!" said a kindly voice in English, as

we came to a halt. "You do well to dance together." The speaker was a handsome, dark-bearded man in uniform. Lady Beatrice coloured up and dropped a curtsey. I made a hobbledehoy's bow, for, from the portraits freely displayed in the shop windows of the town, I recognised Prince Adalbert. "Now, Lady Beatrice," he went on, "you must come with your partner, who is, if I mistake not, Mr Franklyn, and talk to the Princess, who has been enquiring for you both." He offered his arm to Lady Beatrice, and I followed them like a lurcher at a poacher's heels.

Princess Adalbert received us very graciously, but as her remarks were chiefly addressed to my lady fairy, I need not specify them. I know she cut the interview short by saying, "Now this does not amuse you, I am sure, so go and amuse yourselves, my dears, while you can. I only wish that I were of an age to ask Mr Franklyn to let me take Lady Beatrice's place." And with a cheery smile she dismissed us. Ever thoughtful in making others happy and at their ease, Princess Adalbert of Saxe-Bingenstadt will never be forgotten by those who knew her, for to know her was to love her, and her truest memorial is in their ever-mourning hearts.

Scarcely had we left the Royal presence when we met Charlie Larkhall and Princess Pauline. Both seemed to be enjoying themselves immensely.

"Hallo! Bingo," cried Cocky, "this is better than Magoy's, isn't it?" He had quite forgotten the swallow-tails.

Princess Pauline, who knew Lady Beatrice, greeted us with the most radiant smiles. "Now," she said, "the next dance is a quadrille, and I propose that Lord Charles shall dance with Lady Beatrice, and,

if he please, Mr Franklyn with me. So we can be *vis-a-vis*, and not be separated."

"Capital! Princess," roared Cocky, so loudly that a prim Prussian Colonel, who was passing, started as if he had come into sudden contact with a *mitrailleuse*. "Capital—By Jove! I wish we could exchange brains!"

"Oh, *milor!*" said Princess Pauline. "Then what should I do? I could not find room for yours. My head is so much smaller." Cocky had no repartee ready, but he beamed more than ever.

We found the quadrille so much to our liking, that we agreed, then and there, we would keep our partners, turn and turn about, the whole evening. We were very young, and knew nothing about *les convenances*, or Mrs Grundy, or any other bogey, and when the Duke of Middlesex came to claim his daughter, and Count Kromesky his niece, about nine o'clock, we felt that, if the sun had gone down for a while, it had set in most glorious fashion.

"Good-bye, Mr Franklyn," said Lady Beatrice, as I put on her cloak. "I am afraid we shan't meet again for a long time, for papa and I start for Carlsbad to-morrow; but I shall never forget"—she paused, and added—"your dancing." I felt mortified.

"God bless my soul, you don't say so!" were the last words of the Duke, as he helped his daughter into a landau with four horses, and postillions in green and gold jackets. He did not take the trouble to bid adieu to me; but a little lace handkerchief waved me farewell, as the carriage rolled away from the portals of the Stone Palace.

"Bingo," said Charlie Larkhall, fervently, as we walked back to Pickelstein's, "I'm not a chap much given to spooning young women; but, take it from

me, *that* girl's one in a million. You couldn't match her if you hunted from the Cape of Good Hope to Kamschatka. So jolly, too; none of your bread-and-butter miss about her."

"And so frank and honest," I chimed in; "she laughs at compliments, she told me."

"Did she, indeed," said Cocky, with a great sigh. "That's what I expected she would do; not that I paid her any—I'm a bad hand at that sort of thing. I only told her she was the loveliest creature out of heaven."

"What!" I cried, "you told her that?"

"Of course I did," returned Cocky sturdily; "and why the deuce shouldn't I?"

"Only," I said stiffly, "I don't think that you should have addressed such language to Lady Beatrice."

Cocky stood still, looked at me, and burst into a fit of laughter. "Gentle Jehoshaphat!" he exclaimed, "I was talking of Princess Pauline. I say, Bingo, what a couple of asses we are. Let's go and drink the healths of both these delightful ladies at Limburger's." Which we did, and felt all the better for it, and, though not encountering my noble relative by marriage, Mr Flaherty MacWashington, we spent a convivial half-hour.

When we got to "my dame's," as Cocky would insist on calling Major Pickelstein's domicile, we found our hostess playing *besique* with Herr Kraps; the Major, as usual, was on duty elsewhere. Frau Pickelstein at once plied us with a rolling fire of questions about the Princess's dress, and what we had had to eat and drink. Larkhall assured her that the Heiress-Apparent had on a gold dress,

trimmed with diamonds, and wore a Bird of Paradise in her hair, and that the supper consisted of fried oysters, curried *mayonnaise* of crabs, bear and ham sausages, pickled peaches, and partridges stuffed with *paté de foie gras*—the drink being Cabinet Johannisberg and Champagne of 1816.

The worthy Frau received this news with her usual exclamation of "Wunderbar!" but Herr Kraps cynically remarked that, he thought his lordship was mistaken.

"Why, what the dickens do you know about it?" asked Larkhall wrathfully.

"Only, my lord," replied Kraps quietly, "I was employed to write out the *menus*;—but," he added, "I am not privileged to reveal the items."

He meant well, and so did Larkhall when, next morning, he sent the tutor a box of the best Bremen cigars procurable, with his compliments.

On going to our room I found a letter lying on the table, and in the superscription of the envelope I recognised the handwriting of Anthony Fuller. It ran as follows:—

* TIPTOFF CLUB, LONDON—*Saturday*.

MY DEAR OLD JACK,—Just a few lines first of all to hope that you're as well as this leaves me, and secondly to tell you some bits of news. I've done Master Derryboyd, his skipper, mate, and the whole crew, and I expect by the time this reaches you, the owner of *The Seven Sisters* will have been placed under lock and key by his affectionate relatives in the States. I swore I'd get the better of that pistol-shooting rascal, and so I have. I daresay I'm a sort of Paul Jones or Blackbeard, but I don't care the weight of a bluebottle's off hind leg if I am. To cut it short, I hired a big tug at Gravesend, and got Captain Bolitho to engage the crew—great beauties, most of them all ripe for the gallows, some so mellow that they'd almost drop of their own accord like ripe gooseberries. Well, with these merry wights

I dropped down to Ramsgate, where *The Seven Sisters* had gone, and lay alongside of her in the harbour. Clarkson had made me up with a bald scalp and grey beard, and you wouldn't have known me from the cove who went up to Heaven without dying. My first idea was to cut out the yacht, but I soon saw that was impossible, so I went on another tack. Every evening Captain Bolitho, disguised as a Mexican nobleman, would come on deck and play *Ecarté* with me, both of us talking as loud as possible about the game. The bait took sooner than I expected. I could see Derryboyd watching us, and on the third evening he hailed me, and asked most politely if we would do him the honour to come aboard of his craft? We went after we had had a couple of bottles of fizz, and he enquired whether we played cards. I replied, "Just a little." Well, to cut a long story short, we lost ten quid to him on the first night, fifteen on the second, sixteen on the third, twenty on the fourth, and thirty on the fifth. Derryboyd was as pleased as a monkey with a silver tail. This was on a Saturday, and as we "parted," I said to my pistol-flasher, "Look here, Captain Derryboyd, you've had all the luck on board of your own craft. It's a deuced unlucky vessel for us. Will you give Don Vallombroso (that was Bolitho) and myself our revenge to-morrow night on our own vessel? It ain't a swell yacht like yours, but we'll try to make you comfortable." He demurred to this at first, and tried hard to get us to come to him as usual, but both Bolitho and I swore we wouldn't, unless he'd give us a chance on board of the tug. At last he agreed, and the next evening my noble gamester was fingering the pasteboards in our cabin. We let him win as usual. I saw Skipper Lunker and Master Mate go ashore as soon as Derryboyd left *The Seven Sisters*. About eleven o'clock our guest was full of beans and spondulicks, and called for more champagne. He had it. I think there must have been something wrong, Jack, with that wine, for he hadn't put it down his throat ten minutes before he fell backwards on the floor, and of course could not perceive that the tug was going out to sea as quietly and quickly as possible. As we were leaving the harbour mouth we were hailed by some one on the yacht, but we took not the slightest notice, and were soon going down channel as fast as steam could send us, Master Derryboyd, who was, as you know, too handy with his fingers, being securely pinioned down

below. We didn't stop till we got off Portland, and there we hailed a pilot boat, which took Bolitho and me to Weymouth, leaving Derryboyd, who was "semi-not-himself," and very seasick, to the care of "Ginger" Grubber, a cashiered Naval Paymaster, whom we appointed skipper. *The Solan Goose*—that's the name of the tug—is strong enough to weather the Atlantic, and if she doesn't, it don't much matter, but *I* think she will, for there's a pile of dollars waiting for the crew on the other side of the herring pond. On this side I'm quite satisfied with results, and so is Bolitho. As to *The Seven Sisters*, she's been taken possession of by Derryboyd's agent. I am not much good at writing, but there it is. Tabby is going very strong just now. I met her the other day at this crib. She asked where you were, and I said you had gone to study for the Church with the Young Men's Christian Association at Manchester. I don't know if she believed me. She's got the "dramatic author" in tow again, notwithstanding that tap on the cocoa-nut. But, bless me, I've forgotten the principal item of intelligence. I'm starting for Bingenstadt on Friday. You'll know *why*, when you clap your optics on yours till Gabriel's Solo—TONY.

P.S.—Paul Rogers stood by us *well*. I don't know what has happened to Lunker and Brinkley, nor do I care.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST

THE GRANITE SEA

THE news that Anthony Fuller was coming to Bingenstadt filled me with great delight, and more than counterbalanced his information about Tabby. Indeed, since meeting with Lady Beatrice at the Stone Palace, I had striven hard to put away any regard I had had for the fickle and fascinating niece of Mrs Bottlestrap, and at that time I honestly believe I did not care twopence what happened to her. But, *man proposes and woman disposes*, as will subsequently be seen. I looked forward to Anthony's arrival with the greatest expectation, and so did "Cocky" Larkhall, while Gerald Carmichael also anticipated considerable amusement from my description of the "undefeated sportsman," as Tony was wont to style himself.

The day after the reception of his letter was that on which Carmichael, Larkhall, and myself were bidden to the Schnitzel-Jagd by Freiherr von Taubeltof. The meet was summoned to a ruined cross in one of the green alleys of the Waldstrasse, about two miles from the town, and, on our party arriving at the trysting-place, we found that the greater portion of the "vons," and also a large number of "non-vons," had assembled on the sward on foot, in carriages, and on horseback,—the officers and court officials in uniform, and the ladies in their smartest dresses.

Prince Adalbert had driven his consort over in a pony tandem, which form of conveyance was looked upon by the "vons" as distinctly derogatory to court discipline. Madame de la Creuse occupied a huge travelling carriage, drawn by four skewbald horses mounted by postillions, attired in the Longjumeau style. The *Grande Maitresse* of the Grand Duke wore, though it was a very hot day, a green pelisse trimmed with swans' down, and her flaxen wig was surmounted with a white satin coalscuttle bonnet, whence floated plumage enough to stuff a feather bed. Her solemn red face streamed with perspiration, but she was too much of a lady to stay the water-courses with the towel-like lace handkerchief which she twiddled in her yellow-kidded hands. "*La Grande Maitresse*," observed Count Kromesky, who was mounted on a Tartar pony, "should be secured by the new Bingenstadt Water Company, for her supply of moisture seems inexhaustible." The scene was very gay, and the liveliest, and perhaps the prettiest woman on the ground was the Countess von Feuerbach, a little, dark-eyed lady, who sat her Arabian steed like a circus rider. Carmichael specially drew our attention to the Countess, because she had been the heroine of a story which still caused the cheeks of other lady "vons" to crimson when it was mentioned. It was as follows: The Countess, who was left a wealthy widow at a very early age, had attracted the attention of one of the young princes of the reigning house, who, with no honourable intentions, made fierce love to her. Madame von Feuerbach resented his proposals, but on account of his station she could not openly show her displeasure. Nevertheless, she resolved to be revenged on him, the more so as he

openly boasted that he was on such terms with the widow that he could visit her house at any hour of the day or night. Accordingly, having watched her opportunity, she sent the ardent Prince a note to the officers' club when a "Commemoration" banquet was on. In the letter she begged her admirer to come at midnight to the side door of her house, which he would find open, ascend the staircase, and enter the right-hand door on the first landing, where he would find a bedroom and dressing-chamber. She implored the Prince, as he valued her honour, to leave his uniform in the latter apartment. The Prince, as she knew he would, showed this compromising epistle to all his friends, and punctually kept the tryst. Everything was as he expected, and, stripping off his uniform, he retired to the comfortable bed-chamber. Nobody, however, appeared. The Prince, who began to get alarmed when he heard the clock of the Schloss strike three, thought it was time to retreat, but to his horror when he looked into the dressing-room, his overcoat, uniform, helmet, and sword had disappeared. In a furious rage he rushed to the bell and rang like a maniac. Probably the line was cut, for no one responded to his summons. The unfortunate Prince was at his wits' end, and began overhauling the wardrobes to see if there were any male garments in which to escape. All he could find was the costume of a shepherdess, which he remembered Madame von Feuerbach had worn at a fancy-dress ball. Four struck, then five, and then six. The Prince, who had been shivering in his shirt for three hours, thought it was time to decamp. But in what garb? At first he thought of wrapping himself in the counterpane, but a look at himself in the cheval glass soon convinced him that in broad day-

light, as it then was, he would be liable to jeers from the early work-people, and possible arrest by the police. Then he thought of the shepherdess's dress. He was a small man. His boots had been left, and, by covering his face with the sleeves, he might escape detection before arriving at the Wilhelm Palace, where he lived. Accordingly, the Prince rigged himself out in the petticoats, and though his foot-coverings were not *en suite*, he made a very passable peasant girl. He crept down the staircase, and, as he went out of the door, which shut with a snap behind him, he thought he heard a loud burst of feminine laughter, which proceeded from one of the windows of the house. However, the Prince was far too upset to pause, and he proceeded up the street, cursing Madame von Feuerbach, and hoping that Providence would allow him to reach home undetected. The passers-by took very little notice of the Prince-shepherdess, for there had been a fancy ball at the opera-house, and stragglers from the dance were still to be seen. The Prince luckily came across an unengaged droscky, leapt into its welcome refuge, told the driver to go like lightning to his address, and believed all was saved. He stopped the cab at the wicket, which he was accustomed to use, opened the little door, and found himself confronted by Major von Bogelstark, the Grand Duke's principal aide-de-camp, and a file of the Life Guards.

Von Bogelstark was too much of a courtier to smile at the Prince's appearance. On the contrary, he gravely saluted the royal scion, and said: "Your Highness, I have my august Sovereign's orders to convey you to his presence *as you are*."

"At least," exclaimed the poor Prince, "allow me to get rid of this horrible travestie."

"As you are!" said Bogelstark; "those are my orders."

The Prince swore and prayed alternately, but the Major was as obdurate as a money-lender. In less than ten minutes the Prince was being marched through the streets to the Grand Ducal Schloss, for Von Bogelstark was forbidden to allow the Prince to drive in a carriage. A great rabble followed the party to the palace gates, and in no time the report was spread among the burghers, getting up to breakfast, that the Prince, disguised as a country wench, had been arrested. The Grand Duke, who was a very early riser, was up and dressed, ready to receive his peccant kinsman in the audience chamber. On a table by his side were the Prince's uniform and sword, which the treacherous widow had brought to the ruler herself.

"Scoundrel!" shouted the Grand Duke, pointing to the uniform, "you will never wear that again. You have disgraced our house by your libidinous conduct, and this more than asinine attire. In twelve hours you will have left my dominions for ever. As to your would-be victim, that ever-to-be respected lady, Countess Von Feuerbach, I decorated her last night, with my own hands, with the Golden Cross of the Carolina Virtue Order, founded by my sainted spouse."

The unhappy Prince fled to Brussels.

"Countess Von Feuerbach ever since that night has obtained complete sway over the Grand Duke, who declared that she was Susannah and Virginia combined, and commanded that she was always to be admitted to his presence," continued Carmichael. "Madame de la Creuse cannot bear her, of course, but *la petite Maitresse Grand-Ducale*, as Kromesky calls the Countess, does not care a kreutzer for her hatred. But there goes the signal," he exclaimed, as a trumpet

sounded a cavalry charge. The hares, mounted on handsome Hanoverian horses, with huge bags of cut paper on their saddle bows, had started while Carmichael was talking. After the trumpet sound the cavalcade began to move forward at an easy pace.

"What rot!" cried Cocky Larkhall, digging the spurs into his steed's flanks. "Come on, Bingo, and let's show the Sauer Krauts how to travel!"

"Tally ho!" I shouted, and we were soon sailing ahead of every one.

"I say, Bingo," said Larkhall, as, after negotiating a couple of mudbanks, we were crossing a large field of clover without a hedge in sight, "I guess we've got the country to ourselves."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before we heard cries and galloping behind us, and, turning round, we saw an officer making frantic signals to us to stop, with his sword, the while shouting at the top of his voice.

"I think we'd better halt, Cocky," I said.

"Amen!" responded Charlie.

The officer drew up to us, saluted, and said, when he could collect the little English at his disposal: "Milors at the *Schnitzeljagdt*, it is *verboten* for the hound-pack before the Commandant and the general staff to travel. You are of the hound-pack. Forgive me, but it is the not-to-be-broken regulation, as approved by the *Gross-Herzog* himself."

He saluted us again, and rode back to where we could perceive the field, headed by stars and decorations, ambling leisurely far away in the rear.

"I'm off with Snitzeljagds," cried Cocky, when we had done laughing. "The Gross Hedgehog won't find me in the hound-pack again."

"Nor me either," I chimed in. "Why, the beagles on Dorney Common were better fun. Let's have a gallop on our own account." We turned off to the right, and had a pleasant scamper over hill and down, greatly to the astonishment, not only of the women working in the fields, but also, I am sure, to that of the over-fed animals which we bestrode. After losing our way twice in the forest, we came across a finger-post which pointed to Bingenstadt, and, after an hour's spin, were once more clattering over the weed-grown cobblestones of the Residency Stadt.

On reaching "My dame's," I was surprised to find a letter addressed to me in Mrs Sharraton's writing. The envelope was marked "*Immediate—Personal—Important,*" and its contents were as follows:—

HOTEL ROYAL, BADEN-BADEN.

MY DEAR JACK—You must not be angry with me for not keeping my appointment with you the other day, but I was *obliged* to run away, and I could not explain why. But I will tell you all if you will meet me to-morrow (Wednesday) at the hut by the *Granite Sea* on *Mount Boracus* in the Waldstrasse. Take the train to Bruckberg, and then it is about two miles to the hut. When you leave the main road follow the path with white sand on it. Now don't fail to be there. It is *most important* in your own interests that I should see you. *Not a word to a soul.*—Your loving friend,

MINNIE SHARRATON.

There was no post-mark on the letter; it had evidently been delivered by hand. I did not pause to consider how the epistle, addressed from Baden-Baden, could have got to Bingenstadt during the few hours we had been out riding, but resolved to keep the appointment and the secret.

The next morning, without saying a word to a soul, I set forth, and met with no mishap on my way to the village of Bruckberg, save that I left my trusty black-thorn in the train.

I began the ascent of Mount Boracus under the double difficulty of heat and the loss of my walking stick. To reach the Granite Sea I had to walk up a broad road, which terminated abruptly in a kind of circus, where five footpaths met. The road was mainly bordered by beeches, with here and there a patch of pine-trees, but when I got to the circus itself, the tall trees disappeared entirely, and the five pathways were overshadowed by hazel bushes. Obedient to my instructions, I noted that the entrance to the central path was distinguished by a covering of silver sand, and I at once made sure that this was the thoroughfare indicated in Mrs Sharraton's note. It was a lovely afternoon. The rays of the sun gleamed gently through the foliage, and from time to time the squirrels, disturbed in their plunder of the nuts, would scuttle through the bracken. I felt happy, because I hoped to make others happy. This, maybe, is a stupid aspiration, but honestly can I state that from my earliest boyhood the greatest pleasure of my life has been to try to give joyfulness to others. I have never refused bite or sup to beggars, good, bad, or indifferent, and my slender purse has always been open to those who ask. I do not record this fact in any Pharisaic spirit, but simply because, having received exceptional kindness in my time, I would like those who have befriended me to know, that I have not been wanting in the greatest lesson of humanity. But on Mount Boracus I probably felt more of the young Adam than the old. I had been cast from the gates of Paradise, when I met Tabby after the Eton and Harrow match, but I was perfectly certain that the messenger with the flaming sword would never "run me in" at Bow Street. His business at the entrance to

the garden was too severe, not being built on an eight-hours' basis. So I pushed on amid the hazel bushes, until I arrived at the hut which overlooked the Granite Sea. There was not a soul to be seen, and I sat down on the bench before the chalet, with that completion of enjoyment, which always follows a long walk. The Granite Sea stretched from my feet right away to the horizon. I am no geologist, but I suppose that this cataract of boulders must have been due to some eruption of the earth, before scientific professors of theories existed. In any case, even the giants of bygone days would scarcely have played marbles with these big rocks. They rolled one on the top of the other, a cataract of granite, like the flow of an ice-bound torrent interspread with fissures, splits, and caves, but standing firm as a whole in the magnificence of its superb upheaval. And the sunlight made the stone waves all gilded, as I gazed on their marvels. For some minutes I totally forgot my appointment with Mrs Sharraton. I was thinking only of what had been, perhaps of what might be. In her note Mrs Sharraton promised me full particulars of the Flaherty-MacWashington divorce, and I drew out the epistle to make sure of every word that she had written. I never reflected for one instant on the strange fact that she, whom I had seen leaving Bingenstadt, should have made an appointment with me on a lonely summit in the midst of the Waldstrasse. You, who read these lines, will probably exclaim: "What an ass John Franklyn was, to be induced to accept this rendezvous!" I cordially agree with my candid critic. I was an ass, I am an ass, and I probably shall be an ass until such time as I am cremated at Woking. But in being an ass, I am no simpler than was King Solomon, when he took

upon himself a matrimonial company, limited (as he thought) to himself.

I looked on the rocks. I looked on the forest below. I looked at my watch. Mrs Sharraton's communication said, "four o'clock." It was now nearly five. I began to be restless, feeling that I had given my time for no time in return. When we are young we feel this, because, being full of hope, we wait on. In after years, we give a man or woman ten minutes' law to be at the trysting-place, and then we remove to another spot, unless, perhaps, the expected one is the bearer of wealth. However, to revert to Mount Boracus, I was moodily kicking my heels against the seat, outside of the hut, when I heard footsteps approaching, and leapt to my feet. These same footsteps in nowise suggested the advent of Mrs Sharraton, for they were heavy and deliberate, and I could hear them crushing the fallen twigs of the hazel bushes as they drew nearer and nearer. I expected to see one of the Grand-ducal foresters on the look-out for poachers. Through a gap in the coppice, heavily hung with wild clematis, I was very surprised to see the form of Mr Flaherty emerge. But my astonishment was not reflected in his face.

"Ah! Jack," he exclaimed, "I trust I've not kept ye waiting."

"I had no appointment with you," I said, my heart beating like an alarum clock. "I was to meet Mrs Sharraton."

"That's true," he retorted, with one of those hideous grins which showed his dog teeth, "but Mrs Sharraton has sent me to represent her." He took a seat beside me on the bench. "Now, Jack Franklyn," he went on, "I want ye to know that while the streams may

be divided, the waters may meet at the sea. We are the streams, the sea is your Great-aunt Penelope, my wife."

Some of the family blood boiled in my veins at the callous way in which he addressed me. I said, "I don't know what you mean about seas and streams, but I do know this, that you've no right to speak of my aunt as your wife."

"What!" he cried, with a curse, "has she got a decree *nisi*?"

"Not yet," I answered. I felt, as the saying goes, "as bold as brass," "but she will, on the evidence of Anthony Fuller and myself. Take that tip as straight."

Flaherty again showed his dog teeth, and exclaimed: "On the evidence of Anthony Fuller and yourself! What next? Really, I am astounded. Your aunt and I have never had a moment's dissension, and——"

"What about Mrs Sharraton?" I broke in.

"To whom do you refer?" he asked pensively, putting his hand into the pocket of his Norfolk shooting-jacket.

"To Mrs Sharraton," I answered angrily; "the person of whom you spoke but three minutes ago."

I don't know very exactly what happened then, but I certainly felt the concussion of a heavy weapon of some sort on my scalp. Luckily, I had placed a map, a canvas map of the country, in the crown of my cap, and, though stunned for a few seconds, I rushed forward, with a terrible cry which need not be set forth, on my assailant. As I did so, I knew that the struggle between us was for life or death. I cannot explain how I knew it. Perhaps I saw murder in his eyes; but I do know this, that my first endeavour

was to prevent him repeating the blow. I had nothing but my own physical force wherewithal to get the better of him. I was young and in fair condition. As he raised his arm to strike the second blow, my teeth met in his wrist, and the life preserver fell on the ground. At the same time I crooked his left leg with my right, and he tumbled heavily, but, while rolling over, he pinned me by the arms. "Not fair fighting," I hear some "man in the street" exclaim. Granted; but ninety-nine per cent. of the men in the street don't know what a fight for existence means. Flaherty now thought that I was at his mercy, but, thank God! I remembered an old Eton dodge, which I had often employed in a "rouge" at football in front of goals. I "crawled" and reversed positions, but he clung to me like a limpet to a rock, the while the breeze rustled in the trees, and the birds began to sing "good-night" to the sun falling in the west amid rosy-grey and orange-red effulgence. I heard and saw these petty details of my surroundings as I worked for my life. The contest was now pretty equal, for though Flaherty was my superior in age, weight, and height, my muscular strength was fully equal to his. I am sure that he knew this, as we clutched one another with all desperation. The grim necessity of doing unto others as we would not be done by was upon us. For a little while we lay quiet, clutched together. Then Flaherty made a mighty effort. He attempted to raise me from the ground, but I defeated his object by digging my chin into his chest. We rolled over again like two bull dogs, who may not let loose. Then Flaherty, by a mighty effort, got my left knee under his right boot—and a thick soled boot, too. This he ground into my knee-

cap till I nearly shrieked with pain; but, strange as it may seem, I even then remembered that I was of Eton grit, and I thought if I opened my mouth I should disgrace the old school. I believe that in greater and nobler battles there have been, are, and will be, those who think the same. To release my knee, I thrust my right foot full on to Flaherty's left side. He gave a great groan and fainted, while I, trembling in every limb, torn, macerated, and dishevelled, tottered to my feet. My first thought was for my opponent. "Water! Water!" he said, in a few minutes. I had no water, but I pressed to his lips my flask, containing some excellent Swiss *kirschwasser*, with which Frau Pickelstein had supplied me when I told her that I was going for a walk in the Waldstrasse. And, indeed, *kirschwasser* for a pedestrian or a cyclist is the best liqueur in the world. It is not only wholesome and fortifying, but the reason why the Swiss use it so frequently is because a few drops purify any water with which it is mixed.

I may have been Quixotic in attempting the revival of Flaherty, who certainly meant, and had done his best, to send me across the Styx, but as I once read in an Armenian monastery in an old monkish manuscript: "One cannot look on death without remembering what we owe to life—Christ died for us between two thieves—Ergo, thieves deserve our compassion." Anyhow, I gave Flaherty more *kirschwasser*, and presently he sat up, rubbed his eyes, and then spoke.

"Jack Franklyn," he said very feebly, "I thank you. I shall never forget that you have saved my life." He offered to shake hands.

"Why did you attack me?" I asked, not taking his pledge of digital friendship.

"Because I was a jealous fool," he answered promptly but weakly. "I thought that Minnie Sharraton was in love with you, boy as you are."

I laughed, despite my battered face and swollen lips. "If that's all," I said, getting to my feet, "I'll shake hands and pledge you my word you're wrong."

He also scrambled on to his toes with considerably more agility than I could have supposed under the circumstances.

"Your hand, dear boy, your hand," he cried enthusiastically.

I extended mine, and the next minute I was thrown over the declivity on to the cruel rocks of the Granite Sea! My head struck one of the boulders, as I heard a laugh of contemptuous defiance from above. Then as Planché said in one of his extravaganzas (wit in these, not "gag" and "drivel"), my case of *coma* became almost *full stop*.——

When I came to myself again I was lying in bed, and my weary eyes met those of Anthony Fuller, who was sitting by the side of my couch.

"Young fellow," he said gravely, "you've had a narrow squeak of kingdom come. Have a drink of iced beef-tea. No," he said soothingly, as I attempted to stretch forth my right arm towards the cup he held, "you mustn't use that yet."

Then I knew that the limb was broken, and fell back on my pillow, when I had taken the broth, like one in a dream.

CHAPTER

TWENTY-SECOND

SOME OF

ANTHONY FULLER'S RECOLLECTIONS

IT was not for many days that I was allowed to hear how Anthony Fuller had found me on the rocks of the Granite •Sea. It appeared that on his arrival at Bingenstadt, Anthony had driven straight to Major Pickelstein's, where he found Charlie Larkhall, who was quite ignorant of my proceedings. However, as the evening wore on, and darkness set in, both of these good fellows, as also Major and Frau Pickelstein, and the other pupils, began to get alarmed at my absence. Our body-servant, Fritz, was placed under cross-examination, and he stated, when questioned by his master, that I had asked him how far Bruckberg was from Bingenstadt, and how far the summit of Mount Boracus was from Bruckberg Station. Also, I had made some enquiries about the Granite Sea. All of which being translated to Anthony by blushing and tearful Frau Pickelstein, he came to the conclusion that I had gone on an expedition in the Waldstrasse with Gerald Carmichael. But on calling at the temporary British Legation he soon discovered that the *Chargé d'Affaires* had not seen me since the previous day, when Larkhall and I had so abruptly quitted the Schnitzel-Jagdt. Thoroughly alarmed, Anthony immediately organised a search-

party, and, having chartered a carriage, drove off with Larkhall, Carmichael, and a police inspector to the Waldstrasse about one in the morning. The Inspector had communicated by wire with the sub-inspector at Bruckberg, and on arrival there the party was met by a reinforcement of two constables and three guides, armed with sticks and lanterns. After a long and exhaustive search, I was found in one of the fissures of the Granite Sea, as carefully stowed away as a packet of love letters in a lady's davenport. The villain had appropriated my ill-gotten winnings in the wash-leather pocket-book, and had also relieved me of my watch and chain. Mrs Sharraton's letter had also disappeared. I make a *precis* of this, but it was many weeks before I realised my losses. I need scarcely say that Mr Flaherty disappeared on the day when he left me for dead on the Granite Sea, and that all enquiries at the Hotel Royal, Baden-Baden, were fruitless with regard to Mrs Sharraton. I could not believe that she had connived with Flaherty for my destruction. The idea was repugnant to my understanding, and yet, as I lay upon my bed of sickness, I recalled the many instances of falsehood in which I had found her out. I was young and trusting, and I felt even, wounded as I was, chivalrously towards my former hostess, deeming that she had been led astray by a scheming rascal. There are eyes before which you may put the greatest proofs possible, but they will yet blink with the incredulity of St Thomas. I need not dilate on my experiences while I was prevented from moving about. Every one was only too kind. Gerald Carmichael was unremitting in his attention, especially when he learnt that Uncle Philip had written to say that he had been ordered off to Malta,

and could not consequently come to Bingenstadt to see me. Prince and Princess Adalbert sent every day to know of my progress to convalescence, and the Court Doctor, Herr Baggaliortz, called daily. The Major and Frau Pickelstein did all they could for me, especially the latter, for, as usual, the Major was engaged upon his equine pursuits. Charlie Larkhall, "Tolly," and Rashwood, brought me daily presents of magazines, Tauchnitz novels, newspapers, fruit and flowers, and one day I had a great reception, when, greatly to the joy of Cocky, Count and Countess Kromesky, accompanied by Princess Pauline Raban-off, came to see me, bringing with them peaches, apricots, nectarines, grapes, and three dozen bottles of Koumiss, a drink which refreshed me more than all the vintage of champagne. Even Mr Croke condescended to call with some copies of Lloyd's, and Fritz was indefatigable in telling me that I reminded him of a lieutenant who had perished at Mars-la-Tour. But my most faithful attendant was my dear old Anthony. I was certain that he was neglecting his own interests in looking after my welfare, but he strenuously denied this when I accused him of it. He would sit with me for hours, telling me all sorts of amusing stories, and trying to raise my spirits, which were none of the brightest. At the same time he did not neglect the business which had brought him to Bingenstadt. One day he opened a telegram in my presence and said, "Jack, it's all over. Your great-aunt can't get her divorce."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because," he replied, "she has gone to that land where giving in marriage is unknown, also divorces."

"Do you mean to say that she is dead?"

"Even so," returned Anthony calmly. "Do not weep, young fellow, for she is happier with the angels than with Mr Cornelius Flaherty."

I was upset by his information for the moment, because I remembered how, before her infatuation for the tutor, Aunt Penelope had been a second mother to George and myself, and I felt sorry that we had not parted on the best of terms. Anthony noticed my depression—indeed, he could scarcely help doing so—for, weak and in pain, I burst into tears.

"Cheer up," he cried, "we shall do our friend Flaherty yet. Your aunt's money shall be yours."

"I don't care a button about that," I said, wiping my eyes with the corner of the sheet, "but I do hope that blackguard will get what he deserves."

"He will never," observed Anthony, "get that, but he will what he doesn't deserve, namely, more or less hospitality in Her Majesty's palaces of peaceful seclusion; and we'll get your aunt's 'floosh' from him, as sure as my name's Anthony Fuller."

"In what way?" I asked languidly.

"Leave that to me," he replied, with one of his queer eye-flashes. "But I'm on the track."

"I wish, Tony," I said, "you would tell me how it is you know so much about the world and the way it whirls?"

Anthony looked at me fixedly before answering; then he said:—"Jack Franklyn, if I didn't like you, I'd treat your question with contempt, but I do like you, and I'll give you a straight answer. Let me first state, I don't know who I am. That surprises you, but it's the truth. When I was quite a little boy, I was taken by my mother to a great house in the country, where we were received by an old gentle-

man and an old lady. They both kissed me, I remember, and the old lady, who was as lachrymose as you just now, said, pointing to a portrait on the wall, 'Isn't he the image of George?' When we left, the old gentleman gave me a piece of paper. I didn't know what it was; my mother did. It was a Bank of England flimsy, value £100. Well, I never went there again, and I never came across the old people; but one day I was put into cheap mourning, and my mother said, 'You've no friend left on earth now, Tony, but myself.' I was as wise as before she had spoken, and am now. But I noticed from that day forth that our creature comforts got smaller and smaller. There were no eggs for breakfast, and the bacon smelt like sour grease. I soon made up my mind. I went out to find employment. Remember, Jack, I had been bred up with gentlemen at a good private school, but I felt that now I must somehow or other help my mother. For a whole week I wandered about, seeking some sort of a 'shop.' It isn't worth my while telling you all my experiences. At last, after having had as many rebuffs as a prize-fighter gets rib-roasters in a match, I got taken on at a parcel delivery office, my wages being six bob a week. My mother was shocked at my taking such a situation, but I pointed out that I could at least provide steak and mashed potatoes and a bottle of stout for the Sunday dinner; so my parent relented in her opposition, and got at least one good meal a week. You were fagged, I know, Jack, at Eton, but you weren't fagged as I was in that parcel delivery office. I used to go out with the van, and while the driver was soaking in a public-house, I was responsible for hundreds of pounds worth of stuff. So it went on

for two years, when one of our directors, whose brother was a tailor, observed at the half-yearly board meeting that none of the Company's boys were in livery, and proposed a resolution that we should be immediately clad in green corduroys and brass buttons. His proposition was carried unanimously, and was highly commended by several leading newspapers. But this question of uniform settled me. I don't know what it was even now, Jack, but green corduroys and brass buttons choked me off delivering any more parcels. I resigned. My mother, who had become accustomed to the Sunday steaks, was bitterly annoyed with my false pride. She prophesied that I would finally arrive at the gallows. Callous to her rebukes, I began searching for other employment. I had the same difficulty as before. Boys were as plentiful as blackberries. At last, however, I was engaged at a shilling a day by a gentleman of the Hebrew persuasion, who dealt in jewellery. His office was just off Hatton Garden. He had no shop, but he employed two journeymen, and every night would sally forth with a case full of brooches, rings, bangles, pins, and bracelets. All of these wares were in atrocious bad taste, and very cheaply made, most of the stones, I may add, being flawed, and the pearls discoloured; but my employer, by frequenting certain fast restaurants in the West End, generally contrived to get rid of a good deal of his stuff every night. Most of the jewellery was sold on credit, and it was my business to call in the morning and ask for a settlement of account. Very often the purchasers had forgotten all about the matter, and, when I was ushered into their presence, I got a boot or a soda-water glass shied at my head. On the whole, however, I

succeeded, and Mr Lazaruss, that was my master's name, would now and again give me passes for the theatre. I believe he got them by lending acting managers diamond rings to flash on their digits. However, one fine day I got into dire disgrace. Mr Lazaruss had sold an emerald ring to a swell, whom he had met at Robbino's Café, and, as usual, I went off to collect the spondulicks at the supposed buyer's house. I'll call him Smith-Jones, and he lived in Grosvenor Street. I knocked at the door with some trepidation, for I had never been to such a fine house before. I handed my little account to a magnificent butler, and presently was asked to step upstairs, where, in a very beautiful sitting-room, I was met by a very large, powerful, and grey-haired lady, who said, 'I understand that you have called on behalf of Mr Lazaruss for the money due in payment of an emerald ring sold last night to Mr Smith-Jones at Robbino's Café.' 'Yes, madam,' I replied, feeling rather uncomfortable. 'Were you present?' she asked. 'No, madam,' I answered, feeling yet more uncomfortable. 'Do you know Mr Smith-Jones?' she enquired. 'Never saw him in my life,' I retorted, with a kind of trembling in my shanks. 'Oh! indeed! Oh! indeed!' she exclaimed, beginning to pace up and down the room. 'Would you be surprised to hear that Mr Smith-Jones was at Dover last night, and that I, you blackmailing villain, am his wife. Take that, and that, and that!' where-with she laid about my shoulders with a dog whip. I bolted as fast as I could, yelling with agony. I scuttled back as quick as I could to Mr Lazaruss's office, and told him what had occurred. Mr Lazaruss listened attentively to what I had to say, and then observed, 'I've 'alf a mind to repeat the dose. Get out of it.

'Ook it, or I'll tear your liver out.' He raised his hand in a threatening way, and I noticed, that his boot tips were pointed. After all, it was his own greedy fault. He had sent me to Mr Smith-Jones' domestic dovecot instead of to that gentleman's private chambers in Langham Street, Portland Place. Once more I was thrown on my own resources. This time I studied the advertisements in the daily papers. At last I came across one which read, as far as I can remember, in this style—'Wanted a young fellow to look after the comfort of a single gentleman. Address P. C., Messrs Ginger & Co., 4009 Fleet Street, E.C.' I wrote my application, and took it myself to the place indicated. Messrs Ginger & Co. were evidently not in a very public line of business, for it was some time before I could discover their place of abode by noting a little painted slip of tin affixed to the side of a door on a three-pair back. I rapped, and found a wizened little man in a faded blue serge, picking his teeth with a darning-needle. He asked my business. I told him, and produced the advertisement. 'Good,' he said, 'I daresay you will do, but we must have references as to character.' 'Certainly,' I answered. 'Will the Chief Commissioner of Police do for you?' 'Young man,' he said, 'this sort of pleasantry is not to my liking. I expect your only experience of police authority is that of the courts known as Bow, Vine, or Great Marlborough Streets.' I was quite knocked out by this serious address, for I perceived that the man with the darning-needle was not to be trifled with. 'It was only my chaff,' I said humbly. 'To tell you the truth, I haven't got any references, having run away from home.' The man with the darning-needle looked me up and down, and then asked me what was my name? I told

him. I noticed that he gave a kind of a start and looked steadfastly into my eyes. 'What was your mother's maiden name?' he inquired. I didn't think the fact concerned him, however I replied, 'Anastasia Isabel Hopkinson.' 'Did she ever have a brother?' he asked. 'Yes,' I replied, 'one Uncle Jonathan, who ran away to sea when I was a baby, and has never been heard of since. I've heard mother say he was a bad lot.' 'She was quite right,' observed the man with the darning-needle, 'he was, and is a bad lot. I ought to know, for I am Jonathan Hopkinson, and you are my nephew.' He spoke quite quietly and without any of that effusive affection which generally bubbles forth when a man discovers a long-lost relative. I was too astounded at his revelation to open my mouth.

"My uncle went on, 'How's your mother? pretty well off?' I replied that she was very poor, and tried to make a living by letting lodgings. 'Hum!' he said, 'that's bad, and what do you do?' I told him with perfect truth that I did a great many things, but was imperfect at most trades, that once my mother had got me the situation of usher at a school, and that a week afterwards the principal wrote to her saying that I was the most ignorant person on the premises. My mother wired back, 'If he is no good as a teacher, keep him as a pupil.' This appeared to amuse my uncle. 'Stacy sent that, did she!' he cried, 'that shows she has got some of the family spunk left. Well now, Master Anthony, you want to look after the comfort of a single gentleman, as per advertisement?' I answered that such was my desire. My uncle grinned, and said: 'Then we can soon come to terms. I am the single gentleman who needs comfort, and

though I daresay you are as perfect a rascal as ever stepped, I don't mind giving you a trial. Your duties will be to do what I tell you, and your wages will be sixteen shillings a week. You won't prevent your mother from taking in an extra lodger, for this will be your bedroom in future.' He opened a door and showed me a dirty den, containing a small iron bedstead with an unclean quilt, and, as I knew afterwards, a kind of cast-iron mattress. There were also a broken-down chest of drawers, and a chipped blue-and-white jug and basin, standing on a rickety table, one leg being propped up with an old red-bound ledger. The smoke-begrimed window looked upon a blank wall. Altogether, I never saw a more god-forsaken hole. 'Well,' said my uncle, 'what do you think of the diggings!' I said, 'They're splendid, and remind me of those I occupied last week at Buckingham Palace.' My uncle laughed sardonically. 'You're an impudent young dog,' he said, 'and I've half a mind to make my shoemaker acquainted with your tailor. But, do you accept my offer?' 'Beggars mustn't be choosers,' I answered. 'It's a bargain.' 'Be off then,' he said, 'get your traps together, and don't tell your mother a word about *me*. A respectable landlady, who never filches the tea, butter, eggs, and jam of her lodgers, mustn't have anything to do with a bad lot.' I took up my quarters in my uncle's den that same afternoon, and I stayed with him for over two years. My duties were very light, consisting chiefly in taking messages to queer outlandish houses in Seven Dials, Soho, the Boro', and Lambeth, and waiting for the answers. Where my uncle lived I had not the vaguest idea, nor what was his business, for many a long day. The little tin plate bore the name

of Messrs Ginger ; but Uncle Jonathan, on his cards, called himself 'Colonel Reginald Macpherson, late Indian Army.' Only once did any one call upon him during the whole time that I was in his employ. His visitor, a black-bearded man with blue spectacles, was evidently a foreigner, though he spoke excellent English. It was two days after Christmas, and very cold, and I remember that the stranger wore a most beautiful fur coat, which I longed to cast about my own shivering carcass. He gave no name, but told me to inform Colonel Macpherson, that Number Nine desired to speak with him. Uncle Jonathan was evidently upset when I delivered the message. However, he told me to show the befurred individual in, and ordered me off for a walk. Only too pleased to get out, I took the steam-boat to Kew, and did not get back to my dog-hole till about nine in the evening, and then I beheld a very fearsome sight, in the shape of Uncle Jonathan lying dead on the floor, with his throat cut from ear to ear. I gave a howl of terror, and rushed off to find a policeman. Of course there was an inquest, and I told all I knew, which wasn't much. The whole affair was wrapped in mystery, and the Coroner's jury were about to give their verdict of, I believe, 'wilful murder against some person or persons unknown,' when a young man got up and said he would like to give evidence. Do you know who he was? None other than our friend, Mr Cornelius Flaherty. He was sworn, and stated that my uncle's true name was Jonathan Hopkinson, and that his trade was that of a spy, in the pay of the Russian Government. Naturally, this evidence created a tremendous sensation, and the reporters who had been taking very casual notes, now began to take the

proceedings down, verbatim. 'How can you prove your assertion?' asked the Coroner. 'Easily enough,' replied Flaherty. 'Bring the deceased's boots into Court.' Amid a buzz of excitement this was done. 'Now,' said Flaherty, 'shtrip open the soles, and ye'll find a complete map of the new defences of the Thames.'

"A police inspector carefully separated the leathers of one boot, and revealed nothing. An incredulous laugh went round as he proceeded to operate on the other, and a cry of amazement went up as he drew forth a thin piece of parchment from the sole, and handed it to the Coroner, who examined it carefully. 'I think,' he said to Flaherty, 'that you asserted we should find a plan of the Thames defences in these boots.' 'Just so,' returned Flaherty complacently. 'Well,' said the Coroner, 'I find instead, what appears to be a map of the forts at Sveaborg, which I shall forward to the War Office.' Flaherty was thunderstruck, and then shouted: 'By God! he must have been playing a double game. The dirty spalpeen!'"

"Without doubt he was right, but as he could give no further explanation, the matter, after being a nine days' wonder, blew over. How Flaherty got his information, I don't know, but I mean to find out if I can, young feller, and also where my uncle's money went to."

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD

WE GO TO THE "BLOATED GRANGE"

I MUST now skip over very briefly the next three years of my life, for the excellent reason that I was condemned to a life of inaction by the condition of my spinal system. Ever since Flaherty hurled me on to the Granite Sea, I was unable to walk without the assistance of crutches, and all the best doctors in Europe pronounced me to be a hopeless cripple. Uncle Philip was unremitting in his kindness, but I could do little else than lie on my back in lodgings at Richmond, when I would amuse myself by writing plays, light operas, burlesques, and comedies, which I duly despatched to several London managers. Sometimes my piece was returned with a polite note, stating that the Impresario already possessed a play almost identically the same in treatment, which was subsequently confirmed to the letter. On one occasion a comedy was produced at a certain playhouse, to the director of which I had submitted one of my works. This happened to be one well-known to all my friends, so well-known, indeed, that on the morning after the comedy-drama saw the footlights at the Crown Theatre, I received telegrams of congratulations from the Wicked Uncle and Reggie Gregory, and personal praises from Anthony Fuller and Cocky Larkhall. Much amazed, I read the criticism on the play in

two or three newspapers, and could come to no other conclusion but that I had been robbed as deftly and in far more cowardly fashion than if I had been waylaid by a footpad on the Thames embankment in the small hours of the morning. I wrote to the manager, but he vouchsafed me no reply on first call, but subsequently replied that I was quite mistaken, as the piece in question was the work of Mr Herringbone, the well-known dramatist, who had never seen the play to which I referred, and of which he had no cognisance. This is not invention, it is fact. The thing goes on every day. Outsiders marvel why literary men will not write for the stage. There is but one answer, because they are afraid of having their brains, and *ergo*, their pockets picked. That an unscrupulous manager should play the part of a brigand is not perhaps surprising, but that a fellow craftsman should condescend to become a receiver of stolen goods is a direct contradiction to the dog-not-eating-dog theory. However, I believe that the lesson of the Crown Theatre was not lost upon me, for ever afterwards I wasted neither stamps nor letters in communicating with managerial magnates. I used to despatch my parcels by hand, and get a receipt for them from the great man's first secretary, third amanuensis, or fourteenth bottlewasher. On one occasion I sent my man, Louis—he was a Swiss, as handy as a housemaid, and a splendid cook—with a musical play to Mr Barchester Dugong, the eminent opera-merchant and tryer of voices to all the Courts of Europe and Republics of America. Louis did not return till very late in the evening, and the explanation of his tardiness I had better perhaps give in his own *lingua franca*. He said: "I go to

Monsieur Dugong at *théâtre*. A gentleman come from desk. 'E say, 'What for name?' I say, 'Louis Montreux.' 'E write 'im down on piece paper and ask, 'What for voice?' I say, 'Once sing tenor, now baritone.' 'E write 'im down on piece paper and show me in *salon* filled with ladies and gentlemens. I sit down. Every two or tree minute come in footman and shout out name. Den up get lady or gentleman and varnish. I sit four hours vatching, very tired, but vatching. At last footman come in and call out, 'Mister Montrooks.' Up I jump and follow 'im. I introduced to leetle gentleman wit two lady clerks busy wit big books. 'E say, 'Monsieur Montreux, one guinea.' I ask, 'What for?' 'E say, 'To try your voice.' I not understand, but pay in money, and 'e take me to piano and ask what I sing. I make bow, and reply, 'Santa Lucia.' De little gentleman listen, make writing on paper, and declare I no good for new opera. I again open my mouth and declare I not comprehend. He turn red and green, and exclaim, 'What, you no come for engagement?' I say, 'No, I bring letter and parcel from Mr John Franklyn, Esquire,' and hand 'im honourable commission of yourself. Mistare Dugong tear open letter and go off like Monte Vesuvio. 'What dam fool,' 'e cry, 'make dis mistake?' Den he turn to me and ask, wit blood in his eyes, 'Oo are you?' I say, 'I am Mr Franklyn's valet and master-ceremonies.' 'E cry, 'e foam, 'e tear 'is hair, 'e fling your packet across room, and den 'e give me back my money. While he curse and swear and dance like monkey, I fly 'way and so come 'ome.'" I need scarcely add that Mr Barchester Dugong never produced my operetta, nor did he ever try Louis's voice again.

I was lying on my couch one morning, when Anthony Fuller came in, accompanied by a tall, muscular man of about forty. I was totally unprepared for this invasion; but then Tony was a privileged runner of the blockade, which the doctors had established round my body.

"Jack," said Anthony, "you've been pulled about by every surgeon in the world, and I've now brought some one else to see you, not a member of the profession, but——" he hesitated.

"Harry Hamble, the bone-setter, the quack, as the gentlemen with the many letters call me," broke in the tall man, with a good-humoured smile. "Now, Mr Franklyn," he continued, "I don't know that I can be of any use in your case, but if you won't mind my examining your back, I can at least tell you where the mischief lies. Quacks are sometimes better than cock-a-doodle-doo."

In another minute his strong supple fingers were running over my injured frame, but with so gentle a touch that he gave me no pain whatever. Suddenly he stopped just above the left hip bone—(I am no anatomist, and cannot speak scientifically)—pressed and pressed again, till I almost swooned at the exquisite torture. Then followed a great sense of relief, and I cried aloud: "I am well again, Tony, I am well again!"

"You will be in a few days," said Mr Hamble, "or I'm very much mistaken. As usual, these fools of doctors have forgotten the small bones of the human body are much more easily displaced than the big ones, and far more likely to get out of gear."

He shook me by the hand, told me to lie quietly for a couple of days, and was ushered out by the over-

joyed Anthony. On the fourth day after the operation (if operation it could be called), Hamble came again. On the fifth I had sent my crutches to the local hospital, on the sixth I was having a pint of shandy-gaff at the Roebuck, the pleasantest hostelry in all Richmond, having walked nearly a mile without accepting the assistance of Tony's proffered arm, or Charlie Larkhall's offer to take me to the Terrace in his pony cart. As I sat with my friends looking over the most beautiful sylvan aspect in the world, I felt grateful to Anthony, to Hamble, and to God, who had allowed me to be cured, as it were, by a miracle. And here, let me say, that mine was not the only marvellous cure effected by the bone-setter within the radius of my personal knowledge. I knew a man who, believing, as he was told by the doctors, that he was suffering from sciatica, visited all the thermal establishments of England and the Continent without obtaining the slightest relief. Chance brought him into contact with Hamble at Malvern. As in my case, the bone-setter had him walking about in a few days. Another instance of the value of his method was in the case of a great lady, who had slipped on a ball-room floor and fallen heavily. The medicos pronounced her to be lame for life. Acting on a friend's advice, she sought Hamble, and two months afterwards was dancing on the very floor where she had sustained her injury. All honour, then, say I, to bone-setters in general, and to Harry Hamble in particular!

My recovery from what appeared at one time to be a hopeless ailment, was duly celebrated by a grand dinner at the "Star and Garter," which was attended by all my friends and acquaintances, Cocky Larkhall,

who was now in the Irish Guards, being in the chair, and Anthony Fuller on the vice-throne. I know that we ate and drank more than was good for us, and that Reggie Gregory was discovered the next day by a chambermaid lying in a bath without his sartorial belongings, but with Anthony's best silk hat pressed firmly on his brow. The chambermaid, instead of shrieking, coolly turned on the cold-water tap and fled, and in a very short space of time Master Reggie, considerably refreshed, was shaving himself in his own bedroom.

This banquet at the "Star and Garter" was the beginning of a week's amusement at the celebrated hotel, where, I do not mind confessing, we fared not wisely but too well, and entertained all sorts and conditions of guests, not all of the sterner sex. Cocky Larkhall excited my heartiest admiration. He was as deaf to the voice of the charmer as to the snake of the psalmist. He would chaff and joke with any one, but his heart was not in England, but held in safe keeping by Princess Pauline Rabanoff. They were to be married when he was twenty-five, and from the time he met her a more loyal lover never existed. Prone to the wildest frolics, Charlie Larkhall was a rock of purity, by reason of his great devotion to his lady, amid a sea of temptation. I wish I could say the same for myself, although I still kept that talisman, which I ought to have returned to Lady Beatrice Belleisle, when we met at the Stone Palace at Bingenstadt. Too much festivity corrupts and corrodes enjoyment, and a fortnight after my cure we adjourned, that is to say, Anthony Fuller, Reggie Gregory, Charlie Larkhall, and myself, to a pretty, old-fashioned cottage near Laleham. The lawn swept

down to the river, and there was a boat-house at the end of the lawn. I believe that the real name of this picturesque abode was Verbena Lodge, but we immediately nicknamed it "The Bloated Grange." Our rules were very simple for the management of the establishment. In the first place, we engaged two very plain maid-servants, in addition to Louis, one as cook, the other as housemaid. On taking possession, we put down five pounds apiece, and handed them to the goddess of the kitchen, telling her to ask for more when the money was spent. I need not say that we did not wait long before our exchequer was again requisitioned, and we made another pool. It was an easy method of house-keeping, and saved a deal of trouble. Our chief outdoor menial was known as "The Dirtman." He was engaged as gardener, but his principal occupation consisted in preventing our dogs from fighting when we were at home, and, when we were out, in sculling the cook and her colleague about in our boat. Louis, who was a great gambler, used to spend most of his time at the "Blue Bear," playing the natives at bagatelle. In this ideal spot we spent a very happy time. We kept open house in the good old baronial style, and our adherents so approved of our way of living, that every morning they were relieving the wants of the poor and needy at the portal of the "Grange." Our next-door neighbour was a genial Irishman of the name of Marcus Rathline, but always called "Pat." His charming and good-natured little wife wept when she heard that Verbena Lodge had been taken by a crew of young bachelors, but if we could take credit for anything in this world, we might for the fact that Mrs Rathline was never offended by our conduct. Directly

we knew of her presence, we laid down the rules that no female, other than the domestics aforesaid, should be admitted into our midst. We fined one another for loud speaking, bad language, likely to be heard over the hedge, and we made a point of never singing ditties likely to offend her ears. Mrs Rathline shed tears on hearing of our advent. It is satisfactory to record that she cried when we left the Grange, "because we had been such pleasant neighbours." I know that she exercised a good influence on us, and that any one of us would have gone through the pains of purgatory rather than have done aught to annoy her or hers. "Pat" Rathline, her husband, was a man after our own hearts. For instance, on one occasion he purchased a large cockle-boat at Limehouse, and in the confidence of whiskey and water informed us that he intended to convert her into the finest steam launch on the upper Thames. The next morning, filled with this idea, he made his way to Messrs Stratham's Engineering Emporium, but on his journey he had forgotten the object of his pilgrimage. Nothing daunted, however, he bought a magic lantern, and returned in triumph, because he had purchased "something useful." The cockle-boat was never fitted with engines. On another occasion he acquired a little greenhouse, in which he declared he intended to keep monkeys, and again he strolled one day into a sale-room, where he acquired an oboe for a sum so ridiculously low that the silver on the instrument was worth three times what he had paid for it. Mrs Rathline used to hide this ear-piercer after "Pat" had regaled the neighbours with its tones in the early hours of the morning, and the police had objected to its harmony. Dear old Pat! he used to try to

persuade us that he held the future of Ireland in his pocket, and wanted us all to stand in the Home Rule cause for constituencies, the very names of which I have entirely forgotten. Anthony Fuller, however, declared that, unless Pat would guarantee that Mr Parnell would make him Lord-Lieutenant, he had no sympathy with the movement. Cocky Larkhall remarked that his one object in life was to become an Irish Field-Marshal before he was thirty; Reggie Gregory said that he wanted to be Lord Chancellor at the Four Courts; and I asserted that I must have a National Theatre built for me on Stephen's Green. To all of which suggestions Pat would reply—

"There's no knowing what may be. Where's me oboe?" Then we knew it was time to flit.

In the dining-room of the "Bloated Grange," there hung over the mantelpiece an oil portrait of a red-faced gentleman with mutton-chop whiskers. He possessed a broad shirt front, across which trickled a long gold watch chain; his habiliments were of funereal black. This pictorial personage was the defunct husband of our landlady, Mrs Scrupp. I have no doubt but that in real life Mr Scrupp was an exceedingly worthy man, but, as shown on canvas, he filled us with a loathing, which his benignant smile was powerless to avert.

One night Charlie Larkhall—on leave from Windsor—and I were sitting in front of this work of art, and I felt more averse to Scrupp than ever.

"Charlie," I said, "can't we change that old buffer's mug somehow? He'd look fine as a Calabrian brigand."

"Magnificent idea!" cried Cocky, "I'll fix him up at once." And getting his box of water-colours, he had converted the respectable Scrupp into a ferocious

bandit, habited in a scarlet shirt, and possessing Mephistophelian moustaches and eyebrows. The effect was so good that we resolved to leave the alteration for the benefit of the criticism of Tony and Reggie. Now, as ill luck would have it, on the next morning, Miss Lavinia Scrupp, second daughter of our landlady, called to make inquiries about some drainage repairs, which we had requisitioned. Louis showed her into the dining-room, and I, being the only inmate of the house up and about, entered the apartment, to find Miss Lavinia with her eyes fixed in horror upon the Calabrian robber, late Bartholomew Scrupp. She cut short the interview, in a very few sentences, promised all I required, and then, shaking with wrath or fear, fled from the house. She had scarcely gone, when Anthony Fuller—returned from London town,—made his appearance, and was hugely delighted with the bandit, but when I told him of Miss Scrupp's visit and flight, his sense of enjoyment vanished.

"We must alter this at once, Jack," he exclaimed, and summoning Louis, he told him to bring us warm water, soft soap, and a sponge. In ten minutes Mr Scrupp was restored to his rubicund self, and after having been carefully dried in the sun, once more smiled on us from over the mantelpiece. As we were drinking his health in a pint, there came a great knock at the door, and immediately afterwards Louis ushered in Mr Gobble, the house-agent, who had let us the "Bloated Grange." He appeared very flurried, and had evidently travelled fast to our abode.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am sorry to say that I have a very serious complaint to make. Miss Lavinia Scrupp has just called at my office and reported that the portrait of her late lamented father, a member of

the Fishmongers' Company, has been shamefully maltreated. She feels the indignity greatly, and if her assertion be true, I've no doubt but that some one in this house is liable to an action for heavy damages."

"Where does this picture hang?" asked Anthony.

"Why, in this room, of course, over the mantel," replied Mr Gobble. "God bless me!" he added, looking at the presentment of the beaming Scrupp, "I don't understand this. Why, Miss Lavinia told me that her revered parent's portrait was unrecognisable, that his respected features had been transformed in a most diabolical way, that——" he paused for breath.

"Look here, Mr Gobble," said Anthony Fuller, "I beg of you to examine that picture, and to tell me if it is in the same condition, as when you took the inventory."

"Exactly the same," stammered the house-agent. "I cannot understand what Miss Lavinia could have been talking about."

"Mr Gobble," said Tony gravely, "this is very hot weather, even ladies are sometimes given to quenchers. These draughts are not always of a teetotal nature. The 'Blue Bear' is not far distant. Do you catch my meaning?"

"I do, sir," replied Mr Gobble, utterly amazed. "I do indeed, and sincerely regret that I should have been so misled as to bring an unjustifiable accusation. Accept my sincere apologies, gentlemen."

"We do," answered Tony affably; "knowing you to be the victim of Miss Lavinia's hallucination. Allow me to mix you a brandy and soda-water to soothe your shattered nerves. At the same time, I beg of you to assure Mrs Scrupp that this priceless repre-

sensation of her husband is intact. I believe it is the work of Vandyke."

"No, sir," said Mr Gobble, after a long pull at his glass, "I think you are wrong. The picture strikes me as being more in the manner of 'Olbein."

"'Olbein be it," responded Anthony, without even a twinkle in his eyes; "but remember that none of us would dare to desecrate a likeness, which ought to be presented to the National Portrait Gallery. I can only add, I trust that you, as a gentleman, will not make Miss Lavinia's strange and momentary aberration common property. Have a cigar?"

"Mr Fuller," said Mr Gobble, rising to the full dignity of five feet six inches with high heels, "you have appealed to me as a gentleman. As a gentleman I leave you and your friend with all the apologies which one gentleman can offer to two other gentlemen. This unhappy secret is locked in my bosom. You only have the key to the safe."

"That key shall at once be thrown into the river," cried Anthony grandiloquently, as he shook hands with the house-agent, who sallied forth a sadder but not a wiser man.

"Now down with Scrupp again," said Anthony, when we had done laughing, "and give me Larkhall's paint-box." In less than five minutes he had transformed the unfortunate fishmonger into a christy minstrel, with a swarthy complexion and thicker lips than ever "Pony" Moore displayed at St James' Hall. Presently Cocky came downstairs, and the first move which he made was to the sideboard, where usually stood a decanter of whiskey. I, however, late the night before, had replaced the spirit of the Highlands with a bottle of lime-juice. Cocky, with-

out a word, filled himself a beaker with the Montserrat produce mingled with seltzer, but scarcely had he placed the tumbler to his lips, and taken a pull at it, when he gave a frightful scream, and flung the glass on the ground, "Help! Help!" he exclaimed piteously, "I am poisoned!" He sank into an arm-chair, and as he did so his vision lighted on Scrupp as Othello. "Great Jehoshaphat!" cried the wretched Cocky, "I am not only poisoned, but going mad. I left that man," he said, pointing to the picture, "a brigand last night, and now he has turned into the King of the Cannibal Islands!"

The sound of the crashing glass brought every one round him, even the "Dirtman," who was consuming his morning beer in the scullery. As to Tony and myself, we were so faint with laughing, that we were hardly able to relate the true history of the lime-juice and the limner to our well-beloved comrade.

CHAPTER

TWENTY-FOURTH

*STILL AT THE
"BLOATED
GRANGE"—TABBY
REDIVIVA*

LIFE was so pleasant among the Bohemian surroundings of the "Bloated Grange," that I quite disregarded the tradition of my illustrious grandsire, and my hereditary claim to serve Her Most Gracious Majesty in the Diplomatic Service. However, though I had forgotten the Foreign Office, the Foreign Office had not been unmindful of me, and one fine morning, greatly to my dismay, I received a communication, forwarded to me by half-a-dozen byways, including Bingenstadt, inviting me to be examined by the Civil Service Commissioners in a month's time. I need scarcely say that such knowledge of the necessary subjects as I ever possessed, had dwindled down during my enforced rest to very nearly nothing at all. Latin, Greek, and Mathematics, were absolutely dead in my intellect; in French I was fairly proficient; I knew a smattering of colloquial German; and also could read a little Italian. Despite the many hundreds of pounds spent upon my education, I was a heavily manured field, covered with thistles of ignorance. Consequently, when I received the document in question, I had a presentiment that I was doomed to failure, although Anthony Fuller, with more good-nature than common-sense, urged that I had only "to face the starter to romp home." The "Bloated Grange" was not a house conducive to study, and, to cut a long

story short, when I did face the examiners, I was ignominiously ploughed, as I foresaw I should be, in Latin and Greek, and Arithmetic. It is true that the papers set before me on these subjects were worthy of being administered to a Master of Arts at Oxford or Cambridge, but it was a sad thing to discover that, after passing four years of saturation in classics at Eton, I should know less than when I first went to Magoy's. I felt my defeat the more, because only just before the "exam." I went down to the old school, and, three years after I should have done so, bade adieu to the "Head," "my tutor," and "my dame," who, having individually presented me with some expensively bound volumes of prose and verse, wished me collectively at a luncheon party, given by Mr Magoy, "every success in the brilliant profession which I was about to adopt." And no doubt these excellent trainers of the young shared to some extent in my mortification, for had not two of them at all events, been responsible for my researches into the dead dialects? On the other hand, in French—a language in which they had in no way fostered my budding genius, for French classes at Eton in my time were not *parterres* of Gallic cultivation—I made 475 marks out of a possible 500. The Wicked Uncle was not surprised at my rejection. He only said it confirmed him in his belief that there should be a regular training-ship, a sort of *Britannia*, for sucking diplomats. At the same time, he asked if I meant to try again, or go in for some other trade? He himself having been promoted, was kicking his heels on shore, waiting the command of a ship, with about as much chance of obtaining it as I had of being made skipper of a penny steam-boat. The Wicked Uncle, being a

philosopher, and also a *gourmet*, accepted the situation, for, as he expressed himself, he never troubled about going afloat when there was plenty of soft tack on shore. But, with regard to myself, he did not take so light a view. Of course, being now of age, I was my own master; but the very few hundreds of pounds which constituted my income, and the £3500 accumulated ready money, though seemingly a prodigious fortune to me, were not what Uncle Philip proposed should be the only resources of an idle young dog. To his great disappointment, I refused to have anything more to do with diplomacy. I expect the shaft of repulse had sunk more deeply into my mind than I cared to allow. I asked for time to consider my course of action, and to consult my friends.

"Well, whatever you do," said the Wicked Uncle, "work, my lad, and don't be what the Italians call a *far niente*."

This enunciation, coming from such a source, amused me exceedingly, but I took care to receive it with becoming gravity. However, I did consult my friends. Anthony Fuller suggested that I should go on the turf, buy a yearling or two, and win the Derby; Reggie Gregory was of the same opinion; and Pat Rathline's little boy told me that I had better be "A welcher at Kempton Park." I wrote to "Jerry" Carmichael on the subject, and he replied that I ought to follow the example of Robert the Bruce. Cocky Larkhall was the only one who gave me advice after my own heart. It was to persevere in my play-writing. "Hammer away at scribbling, Bingo," he said, "I only wish I could do it myself, but I can't. One of these days you'll get a piece accepted, and then you'll think of your poor old pal, Cocky, and give him a commission to paint the scenery."

"No," I cried, "I'm blowed if I will, but you shall have the best box in the house on the first night."

"Done along with you, Bingo!" said Cocky, not in the least put out. "Now," he added, "when the summer's over, and we're done with this blessed 'Bloated Grange,' you come up and live in London. I know of some 'diggings' that'll just suit you in St James's Place, and you see if we don't capture one of these managers sooner or later. If you only wrote grand opera, I'd get it on for you to-morrow, for my major is hand and glove with Teakson. By the way, I saw a friend of yours the other day, cutting no end of a swell in a private hausom."

"Who was that?" I asked.

"Why, that girl we met at Monkey Island."

"Lady Beatrice Bellisle!" I exclaimed eagerly.

"No! no!" laughed Cocky, "the fair damsel at the Spree. Miss Evelyn Cavendish; the one you call Tabby. I didn't think she'd remember me, but she did, stopped her charioteer, and asked most affectionately after you. 'Pon my word, she's grown a stunner—beginning to act or sing. I often see her at the Spree; she's got the best legs and the cheekiest smile in London."

"I hope you didn't tell her where I was living," I said, for this talk about Tabby did not amuse me.

"It's just what I did do, old boy," observed Cocky, "and what's more, she said she'd be sure and come down and see us soon, on board of Percy Spalding's launch. Hallo! you don't seem pleased," for I had risen with a half-muttered oath.

"Pleased!" I said angrily, "of course I'm not pleased. You know we agreed not to invite any women down here,"

"I didn't ask her, Bingo," retorted Larkhall, "so don't cut up rough. I daresay she's got plenty to do without bothering us. By the way, it was her birthday the other day, and that old ass, Clacton, asked Tony Fuller what present he thought would be most acceptable to the dear girl. Tony said he knew that she was dying to have a prize Yorkshire terrier, and that he knew where a tip-topper, winner at all the shows in England, could be bought for £100. "Clacky" rushes off and secures the animal, decorates the beast with a silver collar and chain, and on Tabby's natal day puts it into a basket, and swaggers off to her rooms in Victoria Street."

"Oh! she's left the hotel then," I interrupted.

"Rather," said Cocky; "she had a fearful row with auntie, and flew from the nest to a resting-place of her own. Strictly proper though. Has an old woman who sells underwear to actresses, as her chaperone. Well, on this occasion, Tabby was entertaining her friends with tea and toast, and other things, when in walked his lordship with his hamper. 'Ah! "Clacky," you naughty boy,' she said, 'you're late, but you're welcome. What present have you brought me? Percy Spalding has given me this sapphire and diamond bracelet, 'Croppy' Smith a turquoise and gold scent-bottle, and so on. Now, what have you got in that basket?' 'The sweetest surprise in the world,' simpered Clacky, handing it to her. Tabby opened it, gave a shriek, and yelling, 'You mean rascal,' flung the unfortunate tyke at Clacton's head. He's unfortunate in his encounters with her, for the brute's carcass knocked out three of his false teeth. Of course every one was laughing, except "Clacky" and the dog. The peer rushed out with his handkerchief to

his mouth, and the wretched animal lay on the floor howling. Tony Fuller, who was the cause of all this hubbub, exclaimed: 'What a shame to treat the little darling so badly!' 'Who do you mean?' asked Tabby, 'the man or the dog?' 'The dog, of course,' replied Fuller, 'he's a bit of mongrel, but not a bad sort,' he added, picking up the beast and stroking him down. 'What are you going to do with him?' 'Send him to the Dogs' Home,' answered Tabby; 'that's where I'd send "Clacky" too, if I could.' 'Oh!' said Tony, 'it would be a great pity to do that. They'll surely shove him in the lethal chamber.' 'And a good job, too,' cried Tabby, 'I don't want the little scoundrel, I've hard work enough to keep myself, much less dogs.' 'What will you take for him?' asked Tony. 'What do you think he's worth?' enquired Tabby of the company. Not a soul there knew anything about the value of dogs except Percy Spalding. Some said one price, some another. At last she turned to Spalding. He knew the type was a good 'un, but as it came from Clacton, he said, 'I should say about thirty shillings.' 'Well,' said Tabby to Fuller, 'we're old friends, and you shall have him for two pounds.' If she hadn't been so greedy in overstating Spalding's valuation, Fuller would have 'blown the gaff.' As it was, he gravely handed out the couple of shiners, put the terrier in the basket, and the next morning sold the lot for £120 to the Grand Duchess Olga of Russia. I wonder he hasn't told you the yarn himself."

"He hasn't been here for the last three days," I answered, "of course you haven't missed him, having been away at Windsor. I don't know what he's up to, but he told me that he was looking out for a race-horse to run at Hampton in some selling stakes."

"Then you may bet your boots that Mr Tony has got something up his sleeve," cried Cocky. "I hope he'll put us in the 'know.'" What wonderful luck he has! Always tumbles on his feet. Why, once when he hadn't got an oat left in the bag, he took his overcoat to the pop-shop and asked for a quid on it. You mayn't perhaps be aware of it, but when garments are handed in to our "uncle," he always feels in the pockets. On this occasion he considerably astonished the worthy Fuller by saying, 'What, only a sovereign! I'll lend you five pound ten, if you like,' and produced a merry little fiver, the existence of which Tony had quite forgotten. I need scarcely say that the Chesterfield did not go in on this occasion, but the honest uncle shared a bottle of the best with our pal. Once at Doncaster, in the Leger week, Tony was about as broke as he could be on the Cup Day, and was spending his last shilling in one of those straw yards which they call refreshment-rooms in Yorkshire, when his experienced eye lighted upon a piece of paper, which he could see was a bank-note, lying on the ground. In an instant his hoof was on it. 'Excuse me, sir,' said a gentleman-like stranger, 'but you are treading on a five pound note which I have just dropped. 'Oh, indeed,' returned Anthony, picking up the waif and stray and examining it. 'Then I'm afraid this can't be your property, for it's a fifty pound flimsy.' And so it was. With the find Tony backed the Cup winner at six to one, and came home rejoicing."

Some days after this conversation we were attending the meeting on Molesey Hurst, better known as "'Appy'Ampton," a very different sort of gathering from that promoted nowadays by Mr Joe Davis and his

associates of Hurst Park. Hampton races were rough, ready, and decidedly unaristocratic, the joy of the East Ender, and the romping-ground of the fraudulent bookmaker. Since my chat with Cocky Larkhall, our comrade Anthony Fuller had not re-appeared at the "Bloated Grange," nor had Tabby steamed up the Thames on Sir Percy Spalding's launch. Reggie, Cocky, and myself took our boat and rowed down to the course, where we placed the "Dirtman," who had travelled on foot, in charge of the skiff. Almost the first person we encountered in the little paddock was the truant Anthony. He greeted us warmly, and explained that "affairs of state" had kept him away from "the family circle." Charlie and Reggie left us to have a look at the horses, and scarcely had they departed when we were joined by a violently-dressed gentleman, in whom I recognised Captain Bolitho, who craved private audience of Anthony.

"You can speak freely," said Tony, "before my friend, Mr Franklyn. What is it?"

"Well, Mr Fuller," replied Bolitho, with a doubtful glance at me, "it's just this. Owing to certain privileges granted to me by the Jockey Club——"

"Drop that," broke in Anthony, "and come to cues."

"Then," continued the Captain, in nowise abashed, "I've got a good thing, a certainty for to-day, a horse, which will start at a long price. I know the owner, the trainer, and the jockey. It's real jam."

"Indeed," said Tony, "what's the name?"

"You'll put me on a bit?" pleaded Bolitho.

"Of course I will," answered Anthony, "but don't fence like a Frenchman. Spit it out."

"It's Mr Fullerton's Red Ink," said the Captain,

in a confidential whisper. "It will run in the Thames Handicap; can't lose."

"Ho! ho!" cried Anthony, "this seems good business. And you know the owner?"

"As well as I do you, Mr Fuller," replied Bolitho. "Upon my honour as a gentleman."

"That's quite sufficient," said Anthony; "I wish every one was as straightforward as you, Captain. Red Ink, I think you said, was the name of the quadruped. What price do you think he'll start at, and what do you want on?"

"He's sure to be at least twelve to one, and I'd like to invest a fiver," said Bolitho.

"All right," returned Anthony, "you can be on. Hand over the stuff."

Captain Bolitho rather demurred to this demand, but, seeing that Anthony was obdurate, he produced two sovereigns, declaring that was all the "ready" which he possessed.

"I'll make up the fiver," said Tony generously. Captain Bolitho poured a shower of thanks on my friend's head.

"Is Red Ink any good?" I asked Anthony, when Bolitho had mingled with the crowd.

"Don't touch him," he answered, "he's a treacherous devil, and, not knowing the course, is sure to run out."

As Anthony prophesied, so it happened; Red Ink, starting at not twelve, but four to one, attempted to commit suicide in the river before he had gone a couple of furlongs. Anthony Fuller and I noted, however, that his jockey, the famous Armstrong, managed to pull him up before he reached the bank.

"Ill-conditioned animal!" remarked Tony. "I hear that he's to be entered for the Grassmead Selling

Race to-morrow. No doubt the owner will be glad to get rid of such a good-for-nothing crock. But," he added, in a lower tone, "if he does see the starter to-morrow, back him, and tell Reggie and Cocky on the strict Q T to do the same. *Verb. Sap.* as they say in Cæsar's Commentaries—Don't ask me any questions, and I shall not attempt to prevaricate."

We had a very pleasant afternoon, and won a little money, but I noticed that Captain Bolitho, after the defeat of Red Ink, was nowhere to be seen. Probably he was too broken-hearted at the collapse of his certainty. Anthony went back with us to the Bloated Grange, but we had to walk all the way there, because our boat was nowhere to be seen. We subsequently discovered that the "Dirtman" had done a good stroke of business by using her for ferrying purposes from the Surrey to the Middlesex shore. Some of his passengers were very heavily shod, judging by the condition of the bottom boards, others were clearly dishonest, for the rugs, the mats, the "sheepskins," and the cushions were all missing on the following morning. The "Dirtman" declared that the skiff must have been dismantled while he was helping "a pore lame genelman to escape being drowned." This unhappy wight was a detected welcher, but I do not go so far as to say that he impeded his flight with our belongings. Rather should I say that the "Dirtman's" negligence had contributed to their abduction.

We found on arrival at the Bloated Grange that our party had been increased by the arrival of a friend of Reggie Gregory, who had eaten a brace of cold grouse, drunk a bottle of champagne, collared my smoking jacket and slippers, and departed to bed in Reggie's room, refusing to give his name to the

terrified Louis, and declaring that life was not worth living without plenty of whiskey. Louis described him as a "big gentleman who was always a-looking for keys in the knees of his pantaloons by scratching in his pockets."

At this graphic description, Reggie cried, "It's Bob Corker, better known as the Count; editor and proprietor of the *Straight Tip*. I shall have to sleep on the sofa to-night, for there's no turning him out of my bed. Last year he came to see the Governor, and threw a marble clock out of the window because the ticking disturbed him."

"I know him," said Anthony Fuller: "he's a bit of a Frenchman, because when writing he's always so fond of using the word 'we.' He entered a dog once for the Cottonopolis handicap, and had it weighted, as he said would be the case, above several well-known horses. He's no courtier, but he's as straight as the day when he 'spouted' his watch to carry on his paper."

Reggie duly slept upon the sofa, and the next morning I got a glimpse of the great Bob Corker, who had apparently risen with the proverbial lark. A battery of empty egg-shells was strewed around him on the breakfast table, alongside three chop bones, while a huge crevasse in the side of a new ham was counterpoised by the remnants of a household loaf and an empty butter dish. Mr Corker was just tackling the remains of some apricot jam when I entered the dining-room.

"Good morning," he said affably, "I don't like this air—spoils one's appetite, and that reminds me that I've got a porker and two couple of ducks ready for the knife at my place. I'll just send a wire, while I think of it, to order their execution. "*Bis dat qui*

sito dat," as the song says. We'll meet again, I suppose, on the race-course. Tell young Reggie Gregory to get some harder tooth-brushes; his are only fit to brush cat's tails with." So saying, this eccentric being flung himself into the street, after pocketing the morning papers which were lying on the hall table.

Acting on Anthony Fuller's advice, we discarded the services of the "Dirtman" in our bereft boat, and took a carriage from the Blue Bear to convey us to Hampton. Just as we were starting, the massive form of Mr Corker emerged from the bar parlour.

"Good business," he exclaimed, seating himself with his face to the horses, "but these country traps never seat four comfortably inside. You'd better climb up beside the driver, young Gregory."

All the way to the course Mr Corker amused us with joke and anecdote, and I noticed that after every narration he fumbled for keys in the knees of his trousers, just as Louis had described.

"Now, Tony Fuller," he said, when we arrived at our destination, "you know a thing or two; what do you think is good business to-day."

Anthony, who had been very silent during the drive, drew a copy of the *Straight Tip* from his pocket, and pointed to the Hampton selections. "Have nothing to do with these," he said.

The Count burst into a great guffaw, and cried: "Tony, I wish I had you on my staff."

"I don't," said Tony, "you'd starve me with kindness. But if you want to risk a little bit to-day, put it on Red Ink."

"Red Ink!" echoed Mr Corker, "I'm not buying cat's meat!"

"Nor am I selling it," retorted Anthony, as the big man thrust his way through the crowd like a pike among minnows, scattering them in all directions.

Reggie, Cocky, and myself all planked our modest ready "fivers" on Red Ink, when the numbers went up for the Grassmead Selling Race. Anthony had disappeared somewhere. The horse won in a common canter at the remunerative odds of fourteen to one in a field of sixteen runners. As we waited beside our book-maker, and Red Ink was apparently friendless with the general public, we were only paid just as Anthony Fuller hove in sight.

"Well, it's all right," he exclaimed heartily, "a nice little deal, and the crock has fetched eighty guineas. Corker is swearing like blue blazes! Hallo! Bolitho," he added, turning to that individual, who came up with anything but a pleasant expression, "what's the matter?"

"What's the matter!" repeated the Captain woefully. "Why, I've been crushed, rushed, and abominably done by. That awful Red Ink, which I gave you, Mr Fuller, yesterday, has been and upset the whole of my financial apple-cart. It's terrible, terrible! I backed the Pigeon in his race to-day, and he finished last. I can't walk back to London; I can't, indeed, Mr Fuller, and I've lost the half of my return ticket from Hampton Court."

"But I thought you knew the owner?" said Anthony.

"So I do, Mr Fuller," cried Bolitho piteously; "but he isn't here to-day."

Anthony Fuller gave a contemptuous laugh. "Look here, Bolitho," he said, "he is here. You are no liar when you say you know the owner. You do. I am, or rather was, the owner of Red Ink. Now, do you understand. Take your two quid back, but don't you

ever try and come the old soldier over me. When you go flat-catching again, take your street whispers to the chickens in Rotten Row, and not to yours truly."

Captain Bolitho jingled the money in his hand, heaved a deep sigh, and turned tail, muttering—"Fullerton!—Fuller!—Fuller!—Fullerton! May I be everlastingly soused like a blooming mackerel for not having nosed the game. It's shocking, truly shocking! Red Ink, indeed; Green Ink, that's what I ought to be called."

Anthony Fuller chuckled, and said: "Poor old Bolitho's quite upset, but really he ought to know better. Now, boys, let's back to the Bloated Grange!" We moved towards the river bank, where we saw Mr Corker appropriating a cosily cushioned punt, from which a very slim young man was endeavouring to dislodge the editor.

"Young man!" thundered Corker, throwing himself down, "if this isn't my punt it ought to be. Ferry me down quickly, or I shall lose my train at Hampton Court." The crowd laughed, the slim young man shrugged his shoulders with an air of despair, and put off into the stream, amid ironical applause. I was looking for our fly when I felt a tap on my back. I looked round and beheld Tabby, more radiant and beautiful than I had ever seen her.

"At last I have found runaway!" she cried, taking my arm. "You must escort me back to London, for my friends have disappeared."

I hesitated for a moment, and was lost for ever.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-FIFTH

IN SOCIETY. LADY
BEATRICE IN
FANCY DRESS

CURIOUS as it may seem, my reconciliation with Tabby was the very event that spurred me on to launching out on the stream of Society. Tabby had a hankering after the "Upper Ten." Lord Clacton, Sir Percy Spalding, and others with whom she was acquainted, seemed to her the greatest and best of men, simply because she read in the *Morning Post* that they were bidden to the Court Ball, or the Royal Garden Party, or had dined with the Duchess of High-flyer, or attended the Marchioness of Thimbletop's dances. Society, in the time of which I write, was not the society of to-day. With the exception of *Vanity Fair*, then climbing into fame against great opposition, by reason of Mr T. G. Bowles's writings, and Carlo Pellegrini's cartoons, there was no weekly journal which busied itself with the everyday doings of smart people; and in *Vanity Fair*, though there might be caustic truths, there was no vulgar scandal, and above all, there was a holy abhorrence for puffing or even alluding to "Nonentities." Consequently, the British *parvenu*, the Transatlantic hotel-keeper, and pork butcher, nay, even most respectable city merchants, knocked vainly at the gates of the West End Paradise. Brëwers and their families were always privileged from time

immemorial. Only the elect of the tribes of Israel passed muster before the great ladies of the Great World, and the poor younger son of long family descent was better qualified to exclaim "Open, Sesame," than the heir of a millionaire tradesman. As one of these wealthy personages once remarked with all humility, "I am sure that it takes three generations to make a gentleman." Nowadays it takes about five minutes. When the future historian comes to record the social history of the Victorian era, he will do well to devote a little research into the "Last Stand of the Old Guard," for it was as heroic in its determination as it was futile in its object. In the opinion of a great judge of men and manners, the straws, which finally broke the back of the social camel, were the institution of the Primrose League, and the reduction of the price of the *Morning Post* from threepence to a penny. In the case of the famous paper, I do not speak without authority when I state that the far-seeing proprietor was inundated with letters, imploring him to reconsider his determination, and offering to double, treble, and even quadruple their subscriptions. The dam was to be broken down, but the defenders of it worked strenuously to repel the impending flood. I regretted, aye! and bitterly regretted afterwards, that my early training had inspired me with a certain contempt for the sons and daughters of Commerce. I looked upon them much as, I suppose, an Indian Prince regards a Parsee plutocrat, but I had no right to assume a position which I never held. What was I but a poor minnow among the gold-fish? It took me a long while to get cured of my disease, as no doubt it will take, even now, many young fellows, but if I prevent even one youngster from making an ass of himself, I shall

not have written in vain. But in this leavening of the Upper Crust every one does not have such a confidential friend and adviser as Anthony Fuller, whose contempt for aristocratic fetishes was only equalled by his ready desire to "do unto others as he would be done by."

At this period there was a gentleman who might have been described as the "Last of the Beaux," or "Gentlemen Masters of the Ceremonies,"—of good family, handsome presence, and perfect manners. He devoted himself to the ordering of the festivities of the great, purely from a love of promoting good fellowship. There have been several would-be imitators of Mr Adolphus Le Monde, not only in London, but also in New York; but they have failed as dismally, as would a thousand tallow dips before the sheen of a single electric light. In one especial point they have been altogether dissimilar from Mr Le Monde. They have always wished to advertise themselves. Mr Le Monde, on the contrary, preferred to give the credit to others for any social success, such as a cotillon of unexampled ingenuity, or a display of surprising floral magnificence at this or that ball of high degree. His distinguished bearing and courtly presence checked any attempt at familiarity, and he crushed a snob with the deadly ease of a game-keeper treading on a viper's head. I remember once that a young Cræsus, who had been presented to him at Ascot, impertinently asked if Mr Le Monde could get him an *entrée* to Buckingham Palace? "I'm afraid not," replied Mr Le Monde, turning on his heel; "the Lord Steward told me the other day that the servants' hall was very inconveniently crowded." Now, Mr Le Monde, as the Arbiter of Fashion, kept a list

of dancing men, all guaranteed to be devoted to Terpsichorean exercise, and of unimpeachable status. Their means concerned themselves. Mr Le Monde rarely satisfied match-making mammas with regard to the incomes of his *protégés*, remarking very consistently to many inquiries that he was not a matrimonial agent. To be on the great man's list was a passport into the highest circles, and, thanks to an introduction to him by Reggie Gregory, I was duly inscribed in the Golden Book, after my qualifications had been examined and approved. Of Mr Le Monde's great kindness to me in the matter of giving me access to countless assemblies, I cannot speak without regretting that his amiable smile is lost to his friends for ever in this world; but believing, as I do, that we shall all meet again hereafter, I shall not be surprised, if I ever pass the portals of the Golden City, to find Mr Le Monde conning the arrivals by the side of St Peter at the entrance gate. Mr Le Monde was acknowledged to be the best dressed *flâneur* in London, and he laid it down as a sumptuary law that while coats and waistcoats should always be of the best, and therefore the most expensive make, a man could, by patronising the less ambitious sartorial professors, obtain a more plentiful succession of trousers, quite worthy of the wearing, than probably he could otherwise afford. And Mr Le Monde practised what he preached. I do not know if he was the suggester of "sixteen-shilling" pantaloons, but he cordially supported their introduction, thereby showing his wisdom and conferring a boon on his immediate followers, who in turn had theirs, in fashionable economy. The frame of the mirror of my sitting-room in St James' Place was stuck as full of invitation cards as the back of the

fretful porcupine with quills. I went to two or three gatherings of the high and mighty every night, and I lounged in the row every day with Cocky Larkhall, Reggie Gregory, and very often Anthony Fuller; but as the latter shrewdly observed, he saw no chance of getting any increase of income by staring at people on horseback. The one person I wanted to see, I did not, and she was the Lady of the Coral Hand. I made enquiries from time to time, and found out that the Duke of Middlesex and his daughter had again gone abroad after the death of the Duchess, who had been an invalid for years before she passed away. And in my spare moments I degraded my sweet talisman by taking it into the associations of Tabby and her friends. Mrs Bottlestrap, better varnished than ever, and with locks of more aureous hue, still kept the hotel in Bloomsbury, but I could see that her relations were strained with her dashing niece. It seemed as if one was afraid of the other, and *vice versa*. I also joined Pipp's Club in the quarter of St James, proposed by Uncle Philip and seconded by Sir Scrobblington Snell, a friend of his. Pipp's was the most extraordinary club ever suggested. It did not open till five in the evening, but, on the other hand, it was kept open on the following morning till any hour, sometimes till mid-day. The amusements of the place consisted of billiards, for which two shillings a game was charged, when members would play for £100—and a "ready sov."—and *Écarté*, whereat I have seen £10,000—I am not exaggerating—nominally change hands, though the onlookers knew perfectly well that £10 would be the outside limit. The "soda and brandy" of commerce was also charged two shillings, and all other drinks at equally high rates, but there was no

comfort, and little food. Indeed, I believe that most of the members lived on Welsh rarebits, poached eggs, and Scotch woodcocks, but to hear them talk, one would have imagined that a Lord Mayor's banquet lacked in the fare to which they were accustomed. They were nearly all young fellows of the aristocratic "gad about" class, but the great mainstay of the club was an eccentric nobleman of mature years and immense wealth. He, it was, who suggested the exorbitant tariff to the delighted proprietor, and, as he never fed on the premises, he did not care a button what Mr Pipp's—that was not his name—demanded for his "snacks" and "tots." It was considered the correct thing to belong to Pipp's, and therefore we submitted to be robbed. The stock of the club, too, must have been very small, for on one memorable occasion I remember, when Peter Poster, the gentleman jockey, and Harry Hopton, of pigeon-shooting fame, were finishing a long bout of *Écarté*, at £1000 a game, Cocky Larkhall and I went round to St James' Place and brought back at 9 A.M. a bottle of whiskey, a flask of brandy, some captain's biscuits, and half a box of cigars, the commissariat of the club having been completely exhausted. Poster and Hopton played till one, amid great excitement and endless wagering, until the former remembered that he had to go to Edgeware to buy a horse, when they divided all their available cash, fourteen-and-ninepence-halfpenny, and Hopton acknowledged that he owed the equestrian nine thousand four hundred and sixty-three pounds. I believe that Poster afterwards accepted eighteen pounds, a bull dog, and a collection of French prints in settlement of his claim; but Mr Pipp's never offered to make good my contribution to his canteen. This

episode set me thinking about the villain Flaherty who had so cruelly robbed and nearly killed me on the Granite Sea. I had repeatedly sought for tidings of him, and so had Anthony Fuller. On the afternoon of the Poster-Hopton encounter, after I had been refreshed by a Turkish bath at the Hammams, I went to see Tabby, who was now entrusted with eight lines on a first night at the Spree, four of which were invariably cut out on the second, and the remainder before the piece was a week old. I do not know why I did so, but, after giving her full particulars of the battle royal at Pipp's, I said, "I wish I could find that scoundrel Flaherty; by the way, Tabby, did you see him?"

She turned quite white. "No-o," she replied, faltering, "I never heard the name before."

This I knew to be a lie, though I could not help wondering at her evident trepidation; but for the moment it passed, like many another deception, when one's better discrimination is blinded. I gave Tabby credit for wishing not to give me unnecessary pain, knowing of Flaherty's uncongenial connection with myself.

At one of the final grand balls of the season, at last I met Lady Beatrice Belleisle. It was a fancy dress dance, given in Carlton House Terrace by the Duchess of Clanronald, and the family mansion had put on its best appearance inside and out. Royalty was present in various disguises, but the greatest success of the evening was gained by Peter Poster, who appeared in his racing garb — cap, jacket, breeches, top-boots, spurs, and cutting whip. Several of the most *décolletée* dowagers declared that Poster's attire was very indecent, but none of them refused his invitation to dance. I wore court dress, Charlie Larkhall repre-

sented Faust, and Reggie Gregory displayed himself as Mephistopheles. The joy of Cocky Larkhall may be better imagined than described when he speedily discovered that his Bingenstadt flame, Princess Pauline of Rabanoff, as Marguerite, was present under the guardianship of the Russian Ambassadress. The fair Muscovite was no less delighted, and though I did succeed in getting the grant of a polka and a waltz, her whole heart was turned towards Charlie. It appeared that she had come over to England on a visit to the Ambassadress, and I fancy, from what she said, that she had not accepted the invitation without some hope of meeting with Charlie. There are, I think, as many pretty pictures in real life as there are on the walls of Burlington House, and this was one to be for ever treasured in my gallery of mental photographs. Dear old Cocky! Dainty Princess Pauline! You had your troubles ahead, but at the Duchess of Clanronald's ball you were as happy children, making sport with the shuttlecock of Time! For my own part, I had no serious thought of anything. I danced with my favourite partners, and I chatted with the wallflowers. I was, as the Recording Angel will decide, always kind to the wallflowers. They were not of the "rosebud garden of girls," but, after all, they were kith and kin in humanity. I was talking to one of these forlorn blossoms, indeed, about to engage her for the next Lancers or Quadrille, when I perceived a Spanish hidalgo, splendidly arrayed in black velvet, with a damsel on his arm. She represented, I was subsequently informed by her own sweet lips, "Forget-me-not." Even to-day I can see her, as I can remember her on Monkey Island, at Lords, and at the Stone Palace of Bingenstadt, but this time in pretty green

drapery, with the light blue myosotis wreathed about her waist and brow. She greeted me with the frankness which has ever been her characteristic—"Mr Franklyn! You here! I am so glad to see you! Take me to my aunt." The Spanish hidalgo frowned and bowed, the wallflower withered up, but I walked away from them the happiest lad in Christendom, with Lady Beatrice on my arm. I let her talk as we strolled between the motley crowd up the ball-room. She told me that she had only just returned to England, that her father had gone to Castle Brig, one of his places in Scotland, and that she had come to stay for a fortnight with her aunt, Lady Susan Macphinnie, for the fag end of the season. Lady Susan proved to be a singularly affable lady, of about forty, and the ample fat, which she displayed, was fair. She was not a widow, but very near that state, her husband being a confirmed invalid. In the meantime she was apparently consoled for the loss of Mr Macphinnie's society by the Spanish hidalgo, from whom Lady Beatrice had separated herself on seeing me. The Iberian don's real name was Larrykin, and he then enjoyed the position of clerk in the Foreign Office. Lady Susan greeted me in the most cordial way, and expressed her great satisfaction that I was an old friend of her niece—how old she did not know. I soon perceived from her remarks that she would be glad if I would take Lady Beatrice off her hands for the rest of the evening, did she so please, and leave her to the tender attentions of the Grandee Larrykin.

"I think," said Lady Susan, "that you had better take Beatty down to supper, Mr Franklyn. We will meet presently, for Mr Larrykin," she added, playfully tapping the hidalgo with her fan, which from time to

time she threw over her adipose charms, "is sure to find us a nice quiet table." *

Mr Larrykin responded to this speech with a look of such ardent devotion that I nearly burst out laughing, for, by the twitching of his lips,* I made out that he was adorned with a false moustache.

Neither he nor Lady Susan was to be seen in the supper room, but Charlie Larkhall and Princess Pauline made up a very jovial *partie carrée* with Lady Beatrice and myself.

"Aunt Susan," said my companion, "is a very funny woman. This is the third ball I've been to with her, and she has always disappeared when I ought to find her."

"I suppose, Lady Beatrice, you didn't want to," I exclaimed, with a shade of resentment in my manner.

Lady Beatrice laughed with the laugh of an English girl, who has candour in her eyes and innocence in her heart. "Oh! Mr Franklyn," she said, "if you only knew how bored I have been with my partners, you would not say that!"

"Do I bore you?" I asked impulsively.

"No, Mr Franklyn," she answered, with no change of voice, "you don't, because you see," then for the moment she grasped the difficulty, and added, "you are different." Charlie Larkhall and Princess Pauline were far too much occupied with their own affairs to overhear ours, although the table was small enough, the more so as Peter Poster at the next was relating how he and Footit, the Richmond pedestrian, had just despatched their mutual cousin, Lady Bodega, to the National Gallery; "and I was most particular," said Peter, "to tell the jarvey to take her to the Old Masters' department."

THE SCARLET CITY

I was listening, and yet not listening. My ears caught Poster's absurd description, but my heart was beating, and my ears were tingling at Lady Beatrice's reply—"You are different." It was spoken quite innocently: it was the honest outcome of a heart which never knew the deceit of hiding what it felt—that false beacon of hypocrisy, which has drowned lives and wrecked fair argosies on the quicksands of Regret, when one flicker of true light would have caused them to steer straight to the haven where they would be, and ought to be—and after Lady Beatrice had spoken, there flashed across me the beastly remembrance of Tabby in the four-wheeler as we were driving from the Alhambra to Bottlestraw's hotel. What a difference between these two woman-girls! It made my other nature revolt from the one which so fatally dominated my being. I knew that, unwittingly, Beatrice Belleisle had declared she loved me, but I also knew that waiving rank, wealth, and every other objection to our union, I was as unclean and unfit as she was perfect and pure.

"You seem very silent," said Lady Beatrice after a pause, which might have been, for aught I comprehended, in the agony of my wrestling with myself, hours, but which surely must have been only minutes, possibly seconds. "Let us go and try and find Aunt Susan. I think she said that I should find her on the balcony."

I gave her my arm mechanically. There was such a great turmoil in my brain, that I felt unmanned and reproachful of myself, as I had never been before. Do not, cynics, who read these lines, sneer at my distress. Remember that I was very young, and that I was also very weak, for alas! I had then a conscience. The demon omen breaks on many a mind's eye before it is prepared for the reddening of sunlight.

We did not find either Lady Susan Macphinnie or the Spanish *hidalgo* on the great covered balcony, so we sat down on a couch looking towards the Duke of York's column, while from the park below came the twitterings of the waterfowl on the ornamental water, mingling their cries with those of the awakening of London life in the fast-gathering light. Coote and Tinney's band still poured forth delightful strains, but we did not wish to dance again. We did not even speak, save in stereotyped phrase. In the cool tranquil air of the morning we experienced the supreme comfort of that other knowledge of one another, which may be felt but never described. We were so happy, I know, that we were content in the bliss of being side by side, and I could not break the silence of consent with the voice of confession. "I thought of Beatrice Belleisle as an angel. I have never thought otherwise since."

Our long *tête-à-tête*, divided in expression, united in reverie, was finally interrupted by Mr Larrykin, the gum on his false moustache being evidently very loose, while in the grey morn his countenance was shown to be very considerably raddled with cosmetics.

"Good heavens!" he cried in a peevish tone, "at last I have found you! Lady Susan has been looking everywhere for you, Lady Beatrice; she is most distressed and very tired."

"I'm very sorry, Mr Larrykin," said Lady Beatrice in a sweet low voice, like one awakening in a dream, "but didn't she ask us to meet her here?"

"No! no," replied the *hidalgo*, almost roughly, "in the conservatory. Please come at once. There are not twenty people left, and Lady Susan is thoroughly distressed; she will, poor soul, have the *migraine*, I am certain."

She rose, and he offered her his arm, which she took.

"Good-night, or rather good-morning, Mr Franklyn," said Lady Beatrice, "it seems strange that we should always meet to part, but I must join my father in Scotland to-morrow at Castle Brig. *Auf Wiedersehen!*"

Mr Larrykin, I thought, rather rudely turned her round, and marched her from the balcony through the ball-room, down the grand staircase. I followed, but as ill luck would have it, I had forgotten my sword, which I had taken off when dancing, and left in a corner, behind a *parterre* of now fading flowers. By the time I had recovered it, and reached the door, the carriage containing Lady Susan and her niece was just departing. Mr Larrykin was waving his adieux with ponderous waves of his many-feathered sombrero. I ran across the road behind the chariot, and got to the corner of the gardens before it passed. As it did so, a little white hand was thrust forth. I just caught a glance of Lady Beatrice's face, and something fell on the roadway. A linkman picked up the something. It was a little bunch of "forget-me-not." I wrested the token from his grasp, threw him half-a-crown, and departed in broad daylight to my abode in St James' Place. As I strolled up Pall Mall, I noticed the sentries at the War Office and Marlborough House on the grin. I had clean forgotten that I was in Court dress, and also, that I had not returned the Coral Hand to its lawful owner. But as I placed my talisman, and the pale blue flowers under my pillow, I knew that my chance of so doing had been increased more immeasurably than I could have imagined. I lay awake for a long time, thinking, thinking, thinking, but at last I fell asleep, thanking God in all sincerity for His goodness. Surely the gratitude of the young is one of the best tributes to the Deity!

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH

*A SPECIALIST'S
SPECULATION .
MR MACDOUGALL
BINGHAM*

ALTHOUGH the "Bloated Grange" was still in our possession, we rarely visited our riverain dwelling, and the place was practically abandoned to our handmaids and the Dirtman. We subsequently learned from Pat Rathline that our adherents lived very pleasantly during our absence, and that water-parties in our boat, conducted by the Dirtman, were of almost daily occurrence. I am sure that they were well provisioned, judging by the bills which poured in upon us, when we finally abandoned the house of Mrs Scrupp and daughters, who sent in a most remarkable account for dilapidations, so we concluded that water-parties were not the only friendly gatherings celebrated at our expense. We were debating, that is, Charlie Larkhall, Reggie Gregory, Anthony Fuller, and myself, whether a month in Scotland would be a congenial way of getting rid of Metropolitan smoke and not a little ready money, when Anthony suggested that a tour in Southern England, including the Goodwood Meeting and the Cowes Week, would be beneficial and invigorating.

"I'm rather anxious myself," he said, "to get out of London, and yet not go North, because I want to be in touch with a certain little business in which

I am interested. I must also tell you that I don't particularly care about Scotland on account of an adventure which I had this week. You must know that for some little time past I've been suffering from enlarged tonsils, and have had my throat examined two or three times a week by Dr Graham Pinnock, the eminent specialist. A nice man, Dr Graham Pinnock, a great favourite with the ladies, and also, I regret to say, very fond of his fees, which at two guineas a visit soon make a hole in one's exchequer. When I had paid the doctor nearly fifty of the best, I began to grow a little weary of his method, and finally I asked him plump and plain when he thought I should be better. He answered that he could not guarantee a date, but made a special appointment with me for last Wednesday, when he proposed submitting my tonsils to very caustic treatment. I could see that he was fooling me, so when I went to his house I had prepared a little trap for my medical adviser. I had been to Tom Touch, the tipster, and said to him, 'Tom, your horses always win, don't they?' 'Nearly always,' he replied. 'I've got some splendid certainties for the Newmarket July—terms, two quid for the week.' 'Well,' I said, 'I'll pay you your fee if you'll send me a certain loser.' He stared at me and grinned, but I assured him that I was perfectly serious, and to prove my sincerity, produced the coin. 'All right,' he said, 'I don't know what your game is, but as sure as God made little apples! I'll send you up the name of a starter as dead as cat's meat before he sees the post.' Up came the wire, 'On no account miss Sour Milk on Thursday—dead snip. Keep quiet, or I shall get into trouble—Fordham.' On Wednesday morning,

when I called on the great Graham Pinnock, I carefully placed the telegram in my pocket handkerchief. He did not keep me waiting, and after a lot of rigmarole about smoking and Scotch whiskey, he made me open my mouth, and shoved a long brush with some beastliness on it down my throat. 'Doctor,' I gasped, 'you're killing me. I shall be sick, I know I shall.' I jumped out of the chair, and put my handkerchief to my mouth, taking very good care that the telegram fell on the ground. 'Go into the next room,' said the doctor, 'you'll find all you want in there. No doubt the uvula has reacted on the mucous membrane of the stomach.' I went through the door, which he showed me, and I promise you that when I got into the room I made noise enough to have awakened a pilot at Gravesend. Presently, I returned to Graham Pinnock. 'I trust you feel better,' he said tenderly. 'Very much,' I answered, 'but I must have a B. and S.' 'Of course,' he said, going to a cupboard, labelled 'poisons,' and in a few minutes the Schweppe and Martell was gurgling down my throat. 'By the way,' said the doctor, handing me the piece of Post-Office pink paper, 'I think you dropped this despatch.' 'Good heavens! doctor,' I cried, 'I wouldn't have any one read that for the world! Tell me, have you done so?' He hesitated, and then answered, 'I had to do so in order—ahem! to discover the owner.' 'Then, promise me, doctor,' I said earnestly, 'that you won't reveal its contents to a soul. I don't know what would happen if the information leaked out. Promise me that this news shall be held sacred.' The pompous idiot drew himself up, and exclaimed, 'Mr Fuller! I am a man of honour. Rely on my word to preserve strict secrecy. Another dose of brandy and soda will do you good.'

As he poured out the liquor I observed that his hand trembled. He said, 'Mr Fuller, now that I am acquainted with the contents of that telegram, may I ask, as a man wholly unacquainted with the customs of the Turf, if you believe the animal named to be a "good thing," I think you call it.' 'Dr Graham Pinnock,' I answered, 'you've seen the wire. You know the name of the sender. I need say no more.' 'Could you—would you enable me to participate in this information?' he asked, twisting his whiskers. 'Of course I will,' I answered readily. 'Thank you, thank you a thousand times,' he murmured, 'I pray you counsel me as to investment.' 'Well,' I said, 'I should advise you to have twenty-five pounds on to win, and as the horse may get beaten by a short head, twenty-five pounds for a place, "one-two," and, as he may run third in a field of eight or more runners, another twenty-five pounds "one-two-three."' "Seventy-five pounds in all,' he said thoughtfully. 'Just so,' I rejoined, 'these transactions are always ready money, when a stable secret's in question.' 'Of course,' he said, opening a drawer, and pulling out his cheque-book, whence he drew a delicate rose-coloured slip, and he filled it in to my order. He wrung my hand warmly as we parted, and asked me to call again very soon, as my precious tonsils needed great attention. He pocketed my two guineas with as much satisfaction as I did his cheque. I needn't add that 'Sour Milk' walked in with the crowd. He was being given a little exercise. I hear that Dr Graham Pinnock has sworn to be revenged on me, and, as he told me himself that he was going on a series of visits to his patients in Scotland, I've no wish to run across him, and be potted like a grouse. Now, at Goodwood, we

may do ourselves a bit of good, and I know a man who'll let us have a yacht for Cowes, all found, skipper, crew, provisions, *et cetera*. He's had to skip the gutter."

"It isn't Derryboyd, is it, Tony?" I asked, laughingly.

"Not much," he answered. "Never mind his name. What say you, young fellers?"

Personally I should have preferred Scotland on account of the Lady of the Coral Hand's presence in the Land o' Cakes, but Charlie and Reggie voted against me, and their approval was confirmed by the Wicked Uncle, whom we happened to meet that evening at Pipp's.

"All bosh going to Scotland," he cried. "You youngsters can't afford Goodwood, Cowes, and grouse potting. Besides, you wouldn't get any moor now without its being as full of cripples as an hospital ship. I don't care much about racing, but I'll join the yacht at Portsmouth, if you'll allow me, and pay my whack of the purser's bill."

That settled the matter. Goodwood and Cowes carried the day, and Tony agreed to book rooms at once at the Arion Hotel at Chichester, and tell the captain of *Cerulea* (that was the name of the yacht), then lying at Southampton, to come round to meet us at Portsmouth on the Saturday after the races. Only one thing troubled me. I knew that directly I broke the news to Tabby, she would want to join the party. And my surmise proved to be altogether correct. When I mentioned Goodwood she clapped her hands, when I supplemented Goodwood with Cowes she cried, "That will be *AI*, and perfectly scrumptious!" Luckily, when I visited the brilliant ornament of the Spree, I was accompanied by Anthony Fuller; indeed, let me confess that, coward-like, I had

begged him to accompany me as a bodyguard. Accordingly, when the niece of Mrs Bottlestrap broke out into these expressions of delight, Anthony thanked her most politely for congratulations, and added, "What a pity it is that you can't come too!"

"Can't come too!" cried Tabby. "Of course I'm coming too!"

"Not with our party," said Anthony coolly. "We're only licensed to carry five, and those are Captain Franklyn, Jack, Charlie Larkhall, Reggie Gregory, and your most obedient—ladies barred by the rules of the Royal Yacht Squadron." Tabby knew of course nothing about the Royal Yacht Squadron, and I need not say that the owner of the *Cerulea* did not belong to that select body, or that "barring ladies" on board a yacht is one of their regulations. "We should get into dreadful trouble if they found you on board," proceeded Anthony, "and you would get locked up in the Castle at Cowes."

Tabby looked very crestfallen, but she rejoined, "Well, at all events, I can go with you to Goodwood?"

"Certainly," replied Anthony, "we shall be only too glad to take you with us, if the Duke of Richmond has sent you an invitation to stay at Goodwood House."

"What!" cried Tabby, "are you going to Goodwood House?"

"Undoubtedly we are," replied the unblushing Anthony; "it's a long-standing engagement."

"Then," sobbed Tabby, bursting into tears, "I'm afraid you will have to do without me."

"I'm afraid so, too," said Anthony, "but there, there, you'll be much happier at Ramsgate."

"Who told you I was going to Ramsgate?" exclaimed Tabby, taken unawares.

"A little seagull I met at the Tiptoff the other night," replied Anthony; "and she whispered she had heard it from Sir Percy Spalding, Baronet."

"It's that horrid Daisy Darey, I know it is!" cried Tabby furiously.

"I didn't say so," said Anthony. "Now, Tabby, say good-bye to Jack and myself. We must be off."

"You may go to the devil for all I care!" screamed Tabby, "I hope I shall never see either of you again!"

"Come, Tabby," I said soothingly, "you mustn't be angry. I'm sure——"

"Look here, Jack Franklyn," she interrupted, with a scathing look in her eyes, "I could be a better friend to you, if I liked, than you think, but, by God! if you play fast and loose with me, I'll show you who holds the trumps. Get out, both of you!" And she rushed from the room.

"We'll take her orders and *will* get out," observed Anthony philosophically. "I'd like to have a sweet young creature like that for a wife."

"Well, Tony," I said, as we got into the street, "you know you put her out with that chaff about the Squadron and Goodwood."

"She swallowed that like Benedictine," remarked Anthony quietly. "What she couldn't digest was my little shot about Ramsgate and Sir Percy Spalding."

"Is it true, then?" I asked jealously.

"Look here, Jack," returned Anthony, "never ask me if anything is true with regard to Tabby Bottlestrap. There's a weather cock on that church over there, pointing due north; yesterday, the cock's bill was tending due south. If it could speak it would be crowing, 'Tabby-doodle-doo, Tabby-doodle-doo!' from morning till night."

Since the ball given by the Duchess of Clanronald in Carlton House Terrace, I had not cared to attend the gatherings of the good and great, and I fear that my lack of zeal lowered me considerably in the estimation of Mr Adolphus Le Monde, who stuck nobly to his guns till the very end of the season, when, as usual, he departed for Homburg in-die-Höhe, there to restore his constitution with fresh air and refreshing water, amid Royal and congenial companions. Charlie Larkhall was quartered at Windsor, and only got up now and again; Reggie Gregory had gone, with the promise of meeting us at Goodwood, to see an old uncle, from whom he had expectations, in Worcester-shire, and as the said uncle was a wifeless Dean, he was worth looking after. Consequently, Anthony Fuller and I were left very much together at nightfall. He was singularly uncommunicative as to his doings by day, and I was never inquisitive enough to ask him about his private business. Eschewing Pipp's Welsh rarebits and poached eggs, we generally dined at a restaurant, and as Anthony was well acquainted with every eating-house in London, our feeding-places varied widely between East and West. One night we were taking our refreshment at a frowzy little hostelry near Leicester Square, which has since become famous and developed into a splendidly equipped establishment, thanks to the considerate puffs which it received from some good-hearted journalists, who gave the struggling proprietor a good turn when he most needed it. When they wanted a *quid* for the *quo* in needy after-days, I am afraid that he had forgotten their existence. However, on this particular evening, Anthony and I were discussing the *Spaghetti Milan-aise*, the *Fonds d' Artichaux à la Soubise*, the *Ecrévisses*.

en buisson, and other dishes not to be discovered on English bills of fare, when there entered unto us Captain Bolitho, who greeted us with his usual magnificent hat flourish, and was evidently greatly excited.

"Mr Fuller," he said to Anthony, "I've got some one to show you. He's outside, but, 'pon my soul, I don't like to bring him in, even into this place."

"What's up, Captain?" asked Anthony.

"Well," answered Bolitho, "I found this man late two nights ago in the Mall, engaged in an altercation with a policeman, who objected to his dossing on a bench. He said to the bob¹, 'If I had my rights I'd be sleeping on the finest feather-bed in London.' The policeman laughed, and said, 'Take care you don't come to the plank,' and walked on. I don't know why, but some impulse made me speak to the dosser, and take him to a coffee-stall. Then he told me that he was the heir to £80,000 solid cash, but that he had legged it from home, run the wide world over, and got back without a mag. Nobody would take up his case. He speaks so certainly that I think there's something in it."

"Hasn't he got any relations?" asked Anthony.

"Only a sister," replied Captain Bolitho, "she's married, so he says, to a swell, and won't acknowledge or even see him. Now, I've looked up the will under which he claims, and I'm pretty certain what he says is true, but I can't keep him afloat, so I've brought him to you, knowing that you are in the swim with certain legal whales."

"Trot him in, and let's look at him," said Anthony.

"He's in a terrible state," observed the Captain, with a shudder, as he rose and left the room.

"This is a rum go," exclaimed Anthony, "but Bolitho's got a nose for a scent of this kind, that I've never known equalled. By Jupiter!" he cried, "here's a cove out of everything, from elbows to uppers."

Captain Bolitho's companion was certainly a most deplorable object. He was apparently about thirty-five, with unkempt dark hair and beard, and his face was as dirty as his hands. He, evidently, did not wear a shirt, for his cracked and greasy frock-coat was buttoned close up to the neck. Frayed checked trousers hung loosely over his ragged canvas shoes, through which his toes peeped, and he carried an old brown wide-a-wake in one hand, and a tattered umbrella in the other. For an heir to thousands he looked not only unclean, but suspicious, and presented a marked contrast to the flashy splendour of Captain Bolitho. Nevertheless, he bowed with the air of a man of education. I could see that Anthony Fuller was interested.

"Have a drink Mr— Mr——," he said, "I don't know your name."

"My name," responded the waif, "is Charles Macdougall Bingham, of Knockington Priory, Northamptonshire. I daresay that this gentleman," he indicated Bolitho, "has informed you of my misfortunes. I am in utter destitution, but my claim to my money is nevertheless as good as that of the Prince of Wales to the succession to the Throne—as this gentleman," here he again indicated Bolitho, "is, or ought to be, satisfied." He drew himself up in his rags, and looked fixedly at Anthony, who surveyed him with a curious and puzzled air for at least a minute.

At last he put his hand in his pocket, and observing, "I'll take a hundred to one chance," produced a five-pound note. "Here, Bolitho," he said, handing it to the Captain, "take Mr Macdougall Bingham away. Have him clothed, fed, and——" He paused.

"You were about to add washed," put in the ragged man. "You are quite right, I want it badly."

"I am of your opinion," said Anthony, with one of his queer twinkles. "Bolitho must bring you to my place in the morning, and I'll see what can be done. You understand that I'm putting down my money on a great improbability, but I'll risk it."

"Sir," said Mr Macdougall Bingham, "I am obliged to you, and have much pleasure in laying you fifty to one to your fiver that, with assistance, I shall prove that I am no impostor. Come, Captain," he added to Bolitho, "I'm dirty, disreputable, and hungry. Let us leave these gentlemen to discuss my preposterous position. Good evening, and thank you." He and Bolitho left us to ourselves.

"Well, Jack, what do you think of Mr Macdougall Bingham?" asked Anthony abruptly.

"I think," I answered, "that there may be some truth in the story, not because Bolitho believes that he has found a claimant in tatters, but because, with his good address, if he were a swindler he couldn't be going about as he is."

"A sound piece of common-sense observation," said Jack, "let's go to Cremorne and have a quiet evening."

Cremorne, in these days, was a pleasant after-dinner lounge, which has never been replaced to my mind by the more pretentious places of out-door entertainment since established, from time to time, in London. It was well managed, and though frequented by "social evils,"

was also largely patronised by "social swells" of both sexes. There are many, no doubt, who remember Alec, the old waiter, who, on being asked by a jocose youth, "I say, Alec, what were you in the garden of Eden?" replied, "Nothing, sir, *I* was employed in the restaurant." The building-over of Cremorne was a distinct loss to the recreation of the Scarlet City.

However, to revert to Mr Macdougall Bingham. Next morning he turned up, another being, cleansed, shaven, and clad in a good second-hand suit of clothes, which Captain Bolitho had very sensibly procured in preference to brand new "reach-me-downs." Anthony carried him off to a speculative solicitor, who advanced the claimant £100 at enormous interest, and agreed to prosecute his claim to the property. Meanwhile Captain Bolitho was instructed never to leave him till the case was proved. One night it was resolved to put a final test to Bingham's assertion. Anthony, in some inscrutable way, found out that his presumed sister, Mrs Marchmont-Rivers, had taken a box at the Pall Mall Theatre, and it was arranged that we should take the claimant to one immediately opposite hers, without saying anything about possible recognition. Accordingly, Mr Macdougall Bingham, Anthony, the solicitor, and myself, took up our position on this eventful evening. Suddenly Bingham got up, and cried in a loud voice, "By God! my sister Ellen!" at the same time pointing to a fashionably attired lady in the opposite box. The lady, attracted by the cry, glanced across and fell back, fainting, exclaiming, "It's Charlie! It's Charlie!" The ruse had succeeded perfectly. The next morning the delighted lawyer advanced Mr Macdougall Bingham £500, at, of course, ruinous interest. In the afternoon, Captain Bolitho came

rushing to Anthony Fuller's rooms, and cried despairingly, "I've lost him! He asked me to go out and change him a tenner, and while I was away, he gave me the slip. What's to be done?" Anthony drove at once to the speculative solicitor's office, and for three days detectives were scouring London and the suburbs in search of the missing claimant. He was finally discovered at midnight, fast asleep on the very bench where Captain Bolitho had first found him. His apparel was dishevelled, and his appearance almost as disreputable as before, and he was certainly very drunk. All he could ejaculate was: "I've been dancing on my own!" When they got him home, they found £325 in bank-notes, stuffed into his boots. Mr Macdougall Bingham, as will be seen, was subsequently of great service to me.

CHAPTER *AT GOODWOOD*
TWENTY-SEVENTH *A SURPRISE*

NOT a fortnight after the incidents described in the last chapter, Charlie Larkhall, Reggie Gregory, and myself, were installed—on the Sunday before the Goodwood meeting—under the shadow of the picturesque cathedral of Chichester. No scene could possibly have been more peaceful; the bells summoned the faithful to worship, the streets were practically deserted, the rooks cawed sleepily in the great trees of Goodwood Park. The hotel where we were staying was one of those ramshackle edifices whereat the host apparently desired to play hide-and-seek with his customers, and unexpected staircases and passages met one at every turn when attempting to find a bedroom. On the Sunday, as I have said, Chichester maintained its episcopal reputation for respectability, but early on Monday morning, between four and five, I was aroused by the ever-growing din of an invading army in the street. I looked out of my window and beheld swarms of men, women, and children, entering into the town, accompanied by waggons, caravans, horses, donkeys, mules, and dogs. Most of them were ill-clad, but all appeared to be in high spirits. They were the camp-followers of the banditti, who were to arrive by rail afterwards. I gazed upon this extraordinary spectacle for nearly an

hour, fascinated by the weird sight of this horde of vagabonds occupying the city with all the assurance of a conquering host. Then I went to bed again, and did not awake till long past ten o'clock, when I found the hotel filled with captains of free companies toasting one another in the vintage of champagne. At this period—I trust matters have mended since—Chichester was handed over to the dervishes of the turf, who pillaged all with whom they came across with reckless impunity. The local police were absolutely powerless to restrain the robbers, the few constables imported from Portsmouth were equally incapable, and the London division knew that any attempt to restrain “the boys” and their followers would be a fruitless task. Perhaps some of their eye-shutting was more remunerative. In any case, Chichester was ceded by the inhabitants, including I suppose, the Bishop, and the Dean and Chapter, to the most reckless scoundrels who ever did a “ramp.” I mention this matter because the circumstance that the fashionable race-meeting took place in the park of the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, and the presence of the venerable prelate of the diocese, who never protested against the sack of the city, naturally inspired many ardent supporters of Church and State with the belief that Goodwood was the most immaculate meeting in the realm. As a matter of fact there was, and, I am sorry to believe is, no greater gathering of rascals than that held under such grand auspices in the prettiest park in Sussex. You, my lady fair, in the latest artistic millinery, have no conception of the presence of villains, who are beneath your very eyes “spotting” those whom they may devour; you, my lord duke, comfortably established with Royalty on

*the Private Stand, do not turn your glasses on the ring just below, where, beneath the very eyes of the police, unfortunate speculators are welched every two minutes with the greatest immunity from arrest or expulsion. Even the honest bookmakers dare not "split" upon their fraudulent colleagues. When Crocodile of Birmingham has vanished, Elephant of Manchester, who has been standing all day next to the defaulter, has never; so he states to the defrauded backer, been aware of the missing one's presence. But the thieving at Goodwood is not confined to lapses of settlement in wagering. Immediately in front of the entrance to the Grand Stand, I have known unfortunate men, searching for their vehicles, to be held up and relieved of all their portable property, in less time than it takes me to write these lines. An unfortunate publican, who, knowingly or unknowingly, permits betting to take place on his property, is, if not agreeably known to the police, promptly summoned and heavily fined. But not only betting, but robbery goes on year by year on the estate of a great noble, descended *par la main gauche* from an English monarch of racing proclivities, who sold Dunkirk to the French, and gave large estates to his multi-mothered progeny. But if the attributes of Goodwood by day were (I prefer to speak in a past tense) reprehensible, what shall be said of the doings at Chichester at night? On Monday evening, Anthony Fuller being our guide, we set forth to "do the rounds." I have visited in my time the slums of most great cities—Paris, Vienna, New York, Berlin, Brussels, and Rome, but I have never come across such rampant and repulsive immorality as existed in the holy city of Chichester. Possibly some Chicestrians

who read this indictment, may indignantly deny the accusation, but then, also, they may be householders letting their domiciles for the week at fabulous rents to the bullies and sharps of the metropolis. Chichester was worse than Doncaster, and that is saying a good deal. Two scenes present themselves to my memory. In the first instance Anthony Fuller had taken us at midnight to a quiet-looking house in an unpretentious but respectable street. His method of procedure reminded me of my first introduction to the Tiptoff Club. He rapped mysteriously on the door, and an old white-haired lady, in a black satin gown, presented herself. She might, by her appearance, have been the widow of a minor canon.

"There's no one at home, sir," she said; "I'm afraid you've mistaken the house."

"Oh no, I haven't," replied Anthony; "there are always rabbits when the warren is found."

The old lady's countenance and manner changed. "Come in," she said; "I see you've got the office."

We entered the hall, which was feebly lit by a gas jet. "I'll take charge of your sticks," said the widow-like lady. "It's generally advisable, in case of accidents."

"Oh!" said Cocky, as he surrendered his wangee, "I suppose you'd like to search me, and see if I'd got a six-shooter in my pocket."

"I've nothing at all to do with what you've got in your pockets," she said very civilly. "This way please, gentlemen." She led us through a baize door into a large room, where roulette was in full swing. A tall, big man with a fair moustache, and an enormous diamond affixed to his expansive shirt front, advanced as we entered.

"Ah, Mr Fuller!" he said, grasping Anthony by the hand, "glad to see you and your friends. Any distinguished acquaintances of yours are welcome to the humble homestead of Jack Rabbits." Here he struck an attitude as of an honest yeoman receiving the lord of the manor and his companions.

"No kid, Jack," retorted Anthony to this cordial greeting. "You don't shear my lambs. I came here to ask you a question. Order a magnum of fizz—no rot-gut, and give me five minutes' talk."

"With pleasure, Mr Fuller," said the giant affably; "you'll find the wine all right, but, excuse me, would you mind our conversation being on the strict Q T?"

"By all means," replied Anthony, "but before we start, I want to know if a man called Macdougall Bingham is in Chichester. Answer me that, fair and square, Jack Rabbits, and then we'll begin to cackle."

Mr Rabbits paused, and then said, "I believe he is, Mr Fuller, but really we had better discuss the question by ourselves."

"All right," said Anthony coolly. "You won't take it ill, lads," he added, turning to us, "if I ask you to leave Mr Rabbits and myself together for a few minutes. Go and look at the game, but don't waste your money in punting, eh, Jack Rabbits?"

"No necessity at all, gentlemen," panted Rabbits, "have what you like; all's free, gratis, and nothing to pay."

"Come on, Bingo," said Reggie, "here goes for the Chichester Monte Carlo."

The men round the roulette table were of the usual kind, one-third hawks, and one-third pigeons, while the remaining third was made up of those astonishing birds, the pigeon-hawks, hybrids, who imagine themselves.

to be birds of prey, until they find themselves plucked, ready to be buried in dove tarts. We knew one or two of the men; among others, I recognised Tolly of Pickles fame, who had been our fellow-pupil at Bingenstadt, in the establishment of Major Pickelstein. He greeted us with effusion, and informed us that he was now one of the Fiftieth Carbineer Guards. "Smartest corps in the service; hot as mustard," he said assertively.

"Wear capsicum-coloured jackets with bright gherkin facings, don't they, Tolly?" asked Cocky, without turning a hair.

"Something like it, something like; but let's to business," and he began putting his sovereigns down on the cloth. Reggie and I looked on, but Cocky, who never liked to be out of anything, sat down and began punting. At first he won a bit, then he lost, and then he won again. As he did so, he planked all his winnings on one number *en plein*, greatly to the surprise of the spectators, players, and the croupiers. The ball went hopping round, and the wheel was just about to stop, when, with a mighty oath, Cocky Larkhall rose to his legs, and kicked the table to the ground. I need not tell what an uproar arose—the candles, the counters, the gold, the notes, and the wheel were all rolling and fluttering over the floor. Mr Rabbits had sprung like a sixty-eight-pound shell to the front, and Cocky, about whom Reggie and I had instantly closed, was looking at the proprietor with a defiant air, while "Pickles" Tolly was crying aloud, "I had a fiver on the red." Anthony Fuller appeared to be as impassive as ever.

"I want to know," said Mr Rabbits, evidently trying to control his feelings, "what you mean by kicking

over that table and spoiling the harmony of the evening?"

"And I want to know," returned Cocky, "what you mean, Mr Rabbits, by allowing us to play with a wheel which can be controlled by the croupier by pressing the leg of the table."

"Pressing the leg of the table," cried Mr Rabbits, "whoever heard of such an iniquitous proceeding? Here, George," he said to the chief croupier, "put that wheel away; and now, do you, Captain Tolly—a gentleman I've known long and honourably—please examine that table, while the waiters are picking up the stakes, and report upon its soundness."

"Captain" Tolly, with the air of a county court judge giving strict attention to a subject of which he is mightily ignorant, examined the table with great attention. He tapped the prostrate piece of furniture with the croupier's hammer, bored it with a gimlet forming part of a collection of cutlery attached to his waistband, shook it leg by leg, and finally declared that he had never come across a more solidly constructed mahogany table. Tolly's decision was received with great applause.

"And now, Lord Charles Larkhall, you ought to apologise," cried Mr Rabbits, getting very red in the gills.

"Apologise; why, certainly," put in Anthony Fuller, "Lord Charles mistook legs for fingers, didn't you, my lord?"

"Of course I did," said Cocky, "and I apologise for doing so."

"I accept your lordship's repentance," said Mr Rabbits grandiloquently; but as the waiters were distributing the fallen booty, amid angry disputes, I

overheard him say to Anthony Fuller: "You're a hot 'un, and no mistake. What stockings fit your legs?"

"What gloves fit your fingers?" retorted Anthony Fuller. "We're off."

"I'm very sorry," began Cocky, directly we were clear of the door; "but I could swear I saw the ball stop suddenly three if not four times."

"Of course you did," said Tony, "but where you made the mistake was in supposing that the stoppage was worked from the table. That trick's done for on portable boards. What stopped the ball was the croupier pressing with his rake a knob underneath the wheel itself, thereby causing one of the bits of metal or fingers to come out and block the passage."

"Why didn't you say so, then?" asked Reggie Gregory indignantly.

"For two very good reasons," replied Anthony. "First, I didn't take you to Rabbits's—you wanted to go. In the second place, I wanted to find out something, and I've found it out. If not satisfied, you can appeal to the House of Lords."

This argument was conclusive. We said no more.

The next day we went a-racing, and, thanks to Anthony Fuller's admonitions, we abstained from betting with the doubtful brigade. Quoth Anthony, "It's no use your wasting your ready on miserable little risks, at two pounds a head. If you want to back anything good, I'll let you know." He did, and we were satisfied. The most amusing individual whom we met was the great Mr Corker, still feeling for keys in the pockets of his trousers.

"Hallo!" asked Anthony, "whither bound?"

"To feed with Sir Percy Spalding," replied Mr Corker.

"But he isn't here," said Tony. "No," exclaimed

Mr Corker, "but his lunch is, that's all I want," and with a Gargantuan guffaw, he made off to a table laid out beneath the trees.

The name of Sir Percy Spalding somewhat alarmed me. "You don't think that Tabby is likely to turn up here, do you?" I asked when I had drawn Tony on one side.

"Not a bit of it," he replied, with the customary twinkle; "Sir Percy isn't here, because Tabby isn't here, and Tabby isn't here because she's chucked the worthy baronet, and gone on a cruise with Lord Clacton."

"Then we may meet her at Cowes," I cried.

"Very likely," observed Anthony, "but not I fancy with Clacton, because he is due on domestic duty. Look here, Jack Franklyn, please take my advice: leave Tabby alone, and if Tabby won't leave you alone, then tell her to go to Madeira. You're young and foolish, but that's no reason why you should go out of training before you've learned to race. I like you, old chap, for yourself, I've nothing to make out of you, one way or another, and therefore I hope you won't mind my again repeating—leave Tabby alone. I shall always regret having been the innocent means of making you so chummy at Mother Bottlestrap's establishment. Now, let's go and look at the next race."

I did not feel particularly pleased with this little sermon, but I could not help owning that Anthony spoke the truth, for he never, even in his most mysterious moments, forgot that we were bound together with that resolution to help and be helped, which is the cordage of real friendship. But unhappily, even when a friend warns a man of my

type from wandering in a morass, or climbing up a precipice, that warning is precisely the inducement which prevails on him to make the attempt. When he is bogged in mud, or has nearly broken his neck in the attempted ascent, then he remembers all too late what might have been, and curses his own perversity.

We had the second instance of the lawlessness of Chichester on the following evening. Cocky Larkhall, Anthony, Reggie and myself, were standing just inside the portals of the hotel, when a country cart drove up, and the yokel who held the reins enquired for the landlord. When the proprietor appeared, the driver said he had a passenger inside his cart, who was next door to death. This statement, of course, excited great curiosity, and the vehicle having been driven into the yard away from the curious and ferocious-looking crowd, which had assembled in the street, the tail board was let down, and disclosed the motionless body of a very much undressed man.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the landlord, "why, it's Number Thirteen, who only came here this evening."

The stable hands pulled out the insensible being, and as they did so, Anthony Fuller said in a startled whisper, "By Jove! it's Macdougall Bingham!" And so it was. We learned from the countryman that he had found the unlucky claimant lying in a ditch on the Arundel road, and that all the unfortunate man had been able to say was "Money—hotel—Chichester," whereupon he had hoisted him into his cart and brought him along. The landlord stated, when Macdougall Bingham had been taken up to bed and the doctor sent for, that the "restored heir" had arrived

late in the afternoon, considerably the worse for liquor, that he had no luggage, but saying he had lost his portmanteau on the road, showed a pocket-book literally stuffed with bank-notes, and begged the proprietor to help himself. The landlord offered to take charge of the pocket-book, and lock it up in his safe, but Macdougall Bingham had bitterly resented this proposal. He was furthermore covered with jewellery, in the matter of a diamond and ruby pin, a gold watch with two chains, and at least four splendid rings. Having told the landlord to mind his own business, he sauntered to the very doorway where we had witnessed his return in the cart. Then he began talking to the bystanders of his own importance, flourishing the pocket-book and setting his watch by the town clock. The landlord in vain begged him to stop this display of wealth. He would go on. Presently two men drove up in a fly and hailed Macdougall Bingham as a friend. The landlord knew them to be ruffians of the deepest dye, and again entreated Bingham to come inside. He was thanked for his pains by imprecations from all three. Presently Bingham got into the fly with the two men, there was quite a little party of assistants willing to help the half-drunken ass into the cab, and then the vehicle was driven rapidly away. The landlord drew the attention of a policeman to the fact, but he said it wasn't his business. No more was seen of Mr Macdougall Bingham until he was brought back in the way I have described. Beyond a severe bruise on his left temple, which might have been caused by a fall, Bingham was not very much injured, but he was as completely stripped as if he had been the man who went down to Jericho. Money, jewellery and clothes,

even his boots, had disappeared. Mr Macdougall Bingham was taken up to room thirteen, attired only in his shirt, drawers, and socks. Tony gave the yokel half-a-sovereign, and then said, "I suppose I must play the good Samaritan to that idiot," so he told the landlord to do all he could for the claimant, who had fallen among thieves. Now, the doctor declared that Mr Macdougall Bingham, who was evidently light-headed, was suffering, not from the crack on his skull, but from alcoholic aberration, more vulgarly known as D.T., and stated that he ought to be watched during the night. The landlord said that his people were so hard worked, that he could not spare a soul.

"Then what's to be done?" asked the doctor.

I felt a grain of pity for the man, and I said: "Well, if nobody else will, I'll look after him as well as I can."

"Bravo, Bingo!" cried Cocky, "I'll be with you. I don't suppose he'll object to smoking."

"I'm not going to be out of this," said Anthony.

"Nor I," said Reggie. "Let's take it turn and turn about. The number of my room's twelve, and there's a door opening into thirteen. Let's have that opened, and then we can divide ourselves into watches, two on and two off."

"The very thing," observed the doctor, "it's very kind of you to agree to this, gentlemen."

"Not a bit of it," replied Anthony, "we know something of him. He's really suffering from having too much to spend."

"Oh," said the landlord, rubbing his hands, "then I suppose he's a very rich gentleman."

"Yes," said Anthony, abruptly, "he could buy you and the Mayor and Corporation as well, if he chose."

"Dear me," said the landlord sympathetically, "this is a most distressing case. I'll see that you gentlemen are made as comfortable as possible. I wish I could spare John, or James, or Benjamin, but I can't, and that's a fact."

"Well, never mind," put in Charlie Larkhall, "you send us up a bottle of whiskey, a dozen of soda, some decent cigars, and a pack of cards, and we'll make the best nurses in the world."

I shall not easily forget that night. Cocky and I went on duty first, leaving Reggie and Anthony playing *Écarté* in number twelve. The doctor had sent in a soothing draught of some sort, which we administered to Bingham, who gave us no trouble whatever, and appeared to be sleeping as peacefully as a little child, when all of a sudden he leaped out of bed with a wild cry, and seizing hold of a chair, rushed at Larkhall. I caught him by the arms, he turned, and fell on to the floor, just as the card players rushed in from the adjacent room. We picked Mr Macdougall Bingham up, and laid him on the bed. He made no resistance, but lay as still as a dormouse. Soon afterwards Charlie and I went off duty, and Anthony and Reggie went on. * We were just beginning a game of 'Snip, snap, snorum,' when again there was a wild outcry, and we ran into number thirteen, to find Anthony stretched on the bed, with Mr Bingham and Reggie wrestling on the carpet. We got them apart, and again our patient subsided. Poor Anthony, we found, had received a nasty crack on the head from a bootjack standing by the bedside, but he was only momentarily stunned. The first words he said when he came to himself were, "We must tie this lunatic down." We thoroughly agreed, but where to get

the necessary cord was a problem. It was now past two o'clock, and we felt certain that a search below would have no satisfactory result. We were about to try and bind our captive with our braces, when Reggie suggested slitting up a sheet into strips. This was no sooner said than done, and in less than ten minutes Mr Macdougall Bingham was trussed as neatly as a turkey at Christmas, for both Charlie and myself were pretty good at knotting, having studied the art when contriving our "cookie" baits at Eton.

"I think he's all right now," observed Anthony complacently, as he surveyed our handiwork; "Mr Macdougall Bingham won't disturb us any more."

To our intense surprise this bound and mummified figure sat bolt upright in bed, and said—

"You're mistaken about Macdougall Bingham, you rascal, Cornelius Flaherty! There's one living witness that you're a bigamist, and that's myself, you damned dirty dog!"

Mr Bingham, having delivered himself of this remarkable speech, collapsed, fell backwards, and, as far as we could tell, subsided into slumber.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Reggie; "I think we ought to have a drink!"

"I think so, too," chimed in Anthony. "I say, Jack, young feller, I shouldn't be surprised if we've come across a very pretty scent bottle."

We had our drinks, and we watched the bound man till morning, at least I did, for my comrades soon fell asleep. I could not. I felt too wakeful. As to Mr Macdougall Bingham, the cause of my unrest, he lay like a log, snoring like a pig, and altogether repulsive to look upon.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-
EIGHTH

*HOW REGGIE GREGORY
WAS "PULLED THROUGH"
AT BRIGHTON*

M ACDUGALL BINGHAM gradually got better, and before we left Chichester was placed by Anthony Fullér in the safe keeping of an experienced male nurse. But, when he came to his senses, he would not or could not remember anything about his strange accusation against Cornelius O'Flaherty. In fact, to use Tony's expression, "he was as dumb as an oyster, and couldn't be made to whistle." Nevertheless, I felt sure that there was some foundation for his wild exclamation, and so I am sure, did Anthony, though he too could be as silent as a bivalve when he chose. Our last evening at Chichester was noteworthy, because of a confession made by Reggie Gregory. We all noticed that on the drive back from Goodwood he, quite unlike himself, was moody, and even surly. He barely joined in the conversation, and, on getting to the hotel, bolted upstairs to his room without taking his usual sherry and bitters.

"There's trouble on that young feller's mind," observed Anthony; "and after dinner we shall have it for dessert."

He was quite correct in his prophecy, for when we had settled down to coffee, cigars, and liqueurs,

Reggie, who had scarcely opened his mouth during the meal, suddenly exclaimed :

"Look here, I've made a d——d ass of myself this week."

"Not the only one, Reggie," said Cocky. "What's up? Spit it out, old chap!"

"Well," replied Reggie, with obvious hesitation. "The fact of the matter is, I've lost £3,575, and I don't know what the dickens to do. I can't settle on Monday, that's certain."

"Three thou. a monkey, and three ponies!" cried Anthony. "Not bad business for a young'un! How on earth did you manage that?"

"I met Corker of the *Straight Tip*, and he advised me to back all his selections. I did, and—curse him! only two came off."

"Don't curse Corker," observed Anthony. "He's the best judge of racing, and the worst tipster, despite the name of his paper, in the world. Didn't I tell you one or two good things?"

"You did," groaned Reggie, "but I thought his information was better than yours, and then my guv'nor wasn't here, and his trainer Jobbins put me on to three horses, which just got done on the post."

"Ah!" said Anthony, "shall I tell you the difference between Jobbins and the Impenitent Thief. One died on the cross and the other lives on it. What do you propose doing, young feller?"

"Look here, Reggie," I broke in, "I've got about £1500 left at the bank. Help yourself, and welcome!"

"And I've got my signature, if it's any use," said Cocky heartily; "but as for ready, I'm fairly stumped."

"Thanks, dear old boys," cried Reggie, with the

water in his eyes ; "but I'm not going to sponge on you, whatever occurs."

"Quite right," remarked Anthony, with one of his queer twinkles, "I've but little sympathy for you, Reggie Gregory, because you've no right to go on in this sort of way. I've no brass to offer you, but I have some good advice. If you follow it, I daresay you'll pull through."

"Advice won't settle my account with Barnicott on Monday," ruefully muttered Reggie.

"I never said it would, young feller," remarked Anthony, lighting a fresh weed. "In fact, I don't intend that you shall settle on Monday, but you mustn't shirk Barnicott. Here's my plan. The yacht's at Portsmouth, waiting to take us to Cowes. Well, instead of going to the Island, she shall sail for Brighton. Do you and Larkhall go to Portsmouth to-morrow, and pick up the Wicked Uncle. Jack and I will be waiting for you on Sunday morning, on Brighton pier. We'll go by train. Don't ask me any questions, but, if you have to hire a tug, get to Brighton about eleven o'clock, and have a good lunch ready on board."

Reggie brightened up. "Do you mean to kidnap Barnicott?" he asked.

Anthony Fuller roared with laughter.

"No," he said. "That isn't a bad idea, but, upon my honour, I never thought of it. It's no use your trying to pump me, Master Reggie, so let's have a quiet game of shilling nap."

"What about Cowes?" asked Cocky ; "I shouldn't like to miss the Regatta altogether."

"No, I daresay not," remarked Anthony coolly. 'I read in the paper this morning, that the Russians

have taken the Marine Hotel. Don't be frightened, we shall be there on Wednesday, or if you don't care to come to Brighton, you can skip Spithead by yourself."

Cocky Larkhall turned very red, and exclaimed: "I think you're infernally impertinent, Fuller. What do you know about Russians?"

"Nothing," replied Anthony good-humouredly. "I've never scratched any. As to being impertinent, I was born so, and you can't quarrel with me on that account."

"If I did," growled Cocky, "I'd break every bone in your body."

"If you do," answered Anthony fiercely, "I'll get your fists employed at Woolwich Arsenal, as steam-hammers."

"Come, come," I said, quickly; "what's the use of this? Look here, Cocky, what we want to do is to help Reggie Gregory. Do you and Tony shake hands at once."

"Please do," chimed in Reggie.

Both Larkhall and Fuller glared at one another, and then Anthony again burst out laughing. "By the walls of Jericho!" he cried, "I think we must have got a touch of madness from MacDougall Bingham. This is the only fist you'll ever feel of mine." And he held out his right palm, which Cocky grasped with all the fervour of a generous disposition. So the gloom was lifted, and we spent a merry evening.

The next morning Cocky and Reggie departed for Portsmouth, while Anthony and I made tracks for Brighton, where we put up at the "Old Ship," then in the zenith of its glory under the able management

of the one and only Bacon. I cannot say that Brighton has ever been a favourite resort of mine. There is too much of the tall hat—flash jewellery—false aristocracy—business, about the place. But perhaps I am prejudiced, because, not at the dear "Old Ship," but at another hotel which shall be nameless, I was once turned out of my room at a day's notice, and on enquiring the reason of the waiter, who brought me my bill, was thus enlightened :

"Well, you see, sir, the gov'nor don't care about claret people ; all his customers must be champagners. That's the custom in Brighton."

Inasmuch as I have always preferred the juice of Bordeaux to the vintage of Rheims, I could not see my way to obliging the landlord in the matter of beverage. But the moral to be deduced from the waiter's explanation was eminently Brightonian.

Anthony's first object was to find out where Mr Barnicott had hung up his macintosh. This was not a very difficult undertaking, for Mr Barnicott was almost as well-known in Brighton as the Aquarium, which at that time was celebrated for the Octopus, the "devil-fish" of Victor Hugo's stirring romance, "*Les Travailleurs de la Mer*."

I have often wondered whether the Brighton Aquarium did the more good to the novel, or the novel to the Brighton Aquarium. Anyway, the Octopus in those days was a sight to be seen. Possibly he is on view now, but his drawing capacity is like that of a broken-down traction-engine.

Anthony having found Mr Barnicott's abode to be none other than the Grand Hotel (the Métropole was neither built nor thought of), despatched a polite note to the bookmaker, asking him to come and have supper

with us. Mr Barnicott sent a polite acceptance, written on paper as thick as cardboard, with a red and gold monogram at the head of the sheet, surrounded by the motto, "All in run or not," and at eleven o'clock the Megatherium of the Turf, as he was wont to describe himself, appeared in company with a brother bookmaker, Mr Bill Crumb, who differed, however, from Mr Barnicott in his method of business, for whereas the Megatherium always betted on the nod, Mr Crumb's trade was conducted on cash principles. Though Mr Barnicott occupied a higher position in Turf society than Mr Crumb, I fancy that the latter did the better trade, the more so as he always laid one, two, or three points under the odds, and never had any bad debts. Mr Barnicott was a big, flabby, fair man of, perhaps, fifty, who was rarely seen to smile. His friend was a little dark fellow of thirty-five or so, who was always crackling with merriment. The language of both would have been unsuited to the congregations of Spurgeon's Tabernacle or the City Temple.

Anthony Fuller greeted both these worthies with effusion, and pressed upon them the best fare which the Old Ship could produce. Mr Barnicott and Mr Crumb did full justice to his hospitality. They told many racy anecdotes, and both allowed that they had had a good week at Goodwood. After supper we played poker, when the bookmakers followed up their luck by relieving Anthony and myself of several sovereigns. It was only when they rose to depart that Tony said: "By the way, my friend, Mr Reginald Gregory, with Lord Charles Larkhall, will be here tomorrow in his yacht, and has asked me to bring a party on board to lunch. If you'll come, Mr Barnicott,

and bring Mr Crumb and any other jolly chaps, he'll be delighted to see you. Gregory is one of those men who, although very rich and the heir to a baronetcy, has no false pride. He likes to have the right sort about him."

"Oh, I know Mr Gregory," observed Mr Barnicott sententiously, "he's the son of Sir Rupert Gregory, isn't he?"

"Yes," answered Anthony, "and, as you know, his father owns the second favourite, Chicken-Hazard, for next year's Derby—I doubt, however, if he'll start."

"What?" cried both the bookies together.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Anthony, "what am I talking about? I've let something slip which I didn't mean to do. But, in strict confidence, I may tell you, gentlemen, that Sir Rupert's health is not what it was. You noticed, perhaps, that he was not at Goodwood."

"Yes," said Barnicott, "but Jobbins told me that he had gone salmon-fishing in Norway."

Anthony gave a sad smile and remarked: "Mr Jobbins is a very trustworthy man—a very trustworthy man." Here Crumb could not repress a guffaw, of which Anthony took not the slightest notice, but proceeded—"But he, knowing the position of Chicken-Hazard in the market, has concealed the state of his employer's health."

"Very naughty on his part," exclaimed Mr Crumb.

Then the gentlemen of the pencil, after thanking Anthony for a most refreshing evening, left, promising to lunch on the yacht as invited.

"That's good business all round," observed Anthony, when they had gone. "Reggie Gregory will be all right, and you'll see Chicken-Hazard

driven to fifty to one after the Middle Park Plate, for which he's not entered." This, I may state, in parenthesis occurred.

On Sunday morning Anthony and I, accompanied by Mr Barnicott, Mr Crumb, and some friends of theirs—Mr Plantagenet Haman, Mr Weevil, and Mr Schneid, an owner of selling platers, awaited the arrival of the yacht. It was a dead calm and the sea *not* as smooth as glass, because the sea never is, despite the poet, the novelist, and the journalist, but only swaying to and fro with the force of the ground currents.

"He won't come," said Mr Barnicott gloomily, "There ain't wind enough to raise thistledown."

"I'll take you six to four in fivers, he does," ejaculated Anthony; "and that we'll all be lunching on board before two."

"I'll lay you," cried Mr Crumb.

"It's a bet," said Anthony.

Scarcely was the wager booked, when we perceived a small steamer emerging from the mist in the west with a yacht in tow.

"Good lad!" cried Anthony, "Reggie Gregory never failed to keep his word yet. Do you see?" he added, turning to Mr Barnicott, "finding the wind fail, he's taken a tug."

"A *real* nobleman!" observed Mr Plantagenet Haman.

"Rather!" chimed in Anthony. "What's the use of being a man of wealth, if you can't keep your appointments. Mr Gregory's word is his bond."

"So is mine," put in Mr Schneid, who had been summoned before the Stewards of various Meetings time without number, but always managed to escape

with a warning. Occasionally some of the Stewards were in his debt, but of course this did not influence their decisions.

"I say, Fuller," said Mr Crumb, as the vessels drew nearer, "I'll give you twenty to be off that bet."

"No, thank ye," replied Anthony, "but I'll work it out with you during the week."

Presently the boats got within hailing distance, and we saw Reggie and Charlie standing in the bows waving their caps, as the tug cast off and turned to the westward. Evidently her charges had been paid in advance.

"Vot a truly noble yacht," said Mr Plantagenet Haman, as the schooner, which was under no canvas let go her anchor with a rattle, plainly to be heard over the still and steaming water.

"Yes, she's a nice craft," observed Anthony in a loud voice. "My friend, Mr Gregory, bought her from the Grand Duke Michael of Russia."

Presently a launch put off from the yacht, rowed with the precision of a man-of-war's boat, and in less than five minutes Larkhall and Gregory were shaking hands all round.

"Come aboard at once," exclaimed Reggie. "This beast of a calm has delayed us, but neither Cocky nor myself would touch a scrap till we met. And to tell you the truth, gentlemen, we're beastly hungry."

"A thorough nobleman!" murmured Mr Plantagenet Haman in my ear. "A toff's a toff, and always a toff, and there ain't getting none of his toffishness out of him."

We left for the yacht in two detachments, Cocky taking charge of the first, and Reggie of the second. The *Cærulea* was certainly a very well-found boat, and

her saloon accommodation was greater than might have been expected. What with silver, flowers, glass, and snow-white napery, the table might have been laid out at the best hotel in the West End. The bookmakers, who were probably only accustomed to the display of a Margate or Ramsgate steamer, were filled with admiration.

"Swelp me, Bob! but this is something like!" exclaimed Mr Crumb.

"A1," observed the more taciturn Mr Barnicott.

"Champion form, I calls it," remarked Mr Plan-tagenet Haman, as he sank into a red plush settee. "Ain't it, Schneidy?"

"Nobby, very nobby," responded Mr Schneid, as he threw his varnished boot-heels on an embroidered silk couch-cover.

"But where's the Wicked Uncle?" I asked when we had settled down to thirst quenching.

"Wouldn't come along," answered Cocky. "Said he had no taste for horse-racing, and would meet us at Cowes later on. Seems a bit of a recluse. What would be a good name for him, Bingo?"

"An *anchorite*," I said. Then everybody laughed, and we fell to on the luncheon, in the happiest of tempers.

I am bound to say that Reggie and Cocky had not spared the resources of Portsmouth in preparing this repast, which was of the most sumptuous description. Every possible delicacy was served up, and the wines were of the best. I could see that Anthony Fuller was very pleased, as he plied our guests with the good fare. Mr Crumb was continually licking his lips, as he ejaculated "Delicious!" "Magnificent!" Mr Schneid would retort, and Mr

Plantagenet Haman would remind Mr Weevil, a little faint-haired man, that "this blow-out ought to last him for a fortnight." Even the flabby Mr Barnicott expanded like a balloon, and, filled with good things, on the suggestion of Anthony, proposed the health of "our illustrious host, Mr Reginald Gregory; long may he be a power in the Ring." This toast we drank with three times three.

Reggie responded in modest terms, declaring that he was only animated by a love of sport, and he did not care a button whether he betted on horse-racing, billiards, cricket, football, croquet, or quoits. In his opinion, there was no more honourable calling than that of the bookmaker—(tremendous cheering). There were those who seemed to regard wagering as an invention of the Devil. Very probably they were better able to judge of the matter than he was—(laughter). He would not call bookmakers angels, for that would imply their desire to fly away, which no real bookmaker ever did till he had settled—(renewed laughter). But if bookmakers were not angels, they were like other men, only just a little lower on the ladder leading to Heaven—(applause). He finished by proposing the Ring, coupled with the names of Mr Barnicott, Mr Crumb, Mr Weevil, Mr Plantagenet Haman, and Mr Schneid. All these worthies, after the toast had been greeted with musical honours, jumped on their legs, started by Mr Schneid, and began to orate. This was so manifestly unfair, though not one of them consented to stand down, that Anthony Fuller, having with difficulty obtained a hearing, proposed that they should raffle for first call. This was unanimously agreed to, and on slips of twisted paper being

shaken up in a hat, Mr Plantagenet Haman was declared the winner, followed by Mr Barnicott, Mr Weevil, and Mr Schneid in the order named. Mr Plantagenet Haman at once opened fire, declaring that this was the proudest moment of his life. His wife, Rebecca, would be indeed rejoiced to see him. "Cheese it, Planty," broke in Mr Barnicott, for it was well-known that Mr Plantagenet Haman and his spouse were not on the best of terms, albeit it was a favourite fiction on the part of the bookmaker to imagine that they dwelt together in the most sublime affection. Mr Haman went on to say that though he had been to Brighton on many occasions, he had never so thoroughly appreciated the delights of the Ocean Wave. At this moment a roll of bread, hurled, I have reason to believe, by the hand of Mr Schneid, who had been drinking green Chartreuse in tumblers, hit the all-too-prominent proboscis of the speaker. He, imagining that the missile had been discharged by Mr Weevil, drowned that gentleman's waistcoat with a soda-water-glassful of champagne, which he held in his left hand. In doing so, he also inundated the portly bosom of Mr Barnicott, who was half asleep, and he, turning fiercely on the innocent Mr Crumb, promptly dabbed a pot of French mustard in his face. In an instant there was wild confusion; the stewards rushed in to the saloon, and it was only by cajolment mingled with threats, that Anthony Fuller managed to allay the disturbance, which had arisen as quickly as does a massacre of Christians in Crete. Considerable damage had been done. Mr Schneid had come to blows with Mr Weevil, and Mr Barnicott and Mr Crumb were rolling about on the floor, while Mr

Plantagenet Haman's nose dripped gore over Reggie Gregory's white flannels. However Anthony, with his customary tact, managed to restore order, and harmony regained her sacred sway. It was not till the church-bells on shore were ringing for evening service that our guests left us, mainly at the instance of Mr Plantagenet Haman, who said that he must write a letter to his darling wife, Rebecca. Mr Weevil was let down into the boat in a deck-chair, and Mr Barnicott had to be run over the side with a line round his chest, no chair being strong enough to bear his weight. As to Mr Schneid, exclaiming, "Thank the Lord, we're once more at home!" he walked into the sea, and was rescued with considerable difficulty by a boat-hook.

"Nothing could have gone better," observed Anthony Fuller as he watched our slaves of the Ring leaving for the pier. "The whole thing's been really splendid. Now, Reggie," he continued, "you must lie doggo to-morrow. On Tuesday we'll all go to the faces." Monday therefore was a *dies non*. Anthony went ashore, and Cocky, Reggie, and I fished from morning till night without catching more than a dozen whittings, and several scores of small and utterly useless crabs.

On Tuesday we went up to the Course, and, as we went, Anthony spoke very seriously to Reggie.

"Look here, young feller, thanks to the yacht and the luncheon, you can hold over for this week, but you've got to get your own again before next Monday, or take the consequences. Now, to-day, there's a horse running for the Dyke Stakes called Blue Blazes. It isn't a good crock, but it should just about win at a long price. Go into the ring, see our

friends, Barnicott, Haman, Weevil, and Schneid, and put a monkey on between them!"

"A monkey!" cried Reggie, "isn't that a lot to risk over one race?"

"Good Heavens!" said Anthony, "here are you out three thou. and a half, and yet you object to making a *coup*, which I shouldn't advise you to try if I hadn't some reliable information. Blue Blazes as much as you can get on, and if you can touch Master Crumb for a ready hundred, do so. As to you, young fellers," he added, indicating Cocky and myself, "you can do what you please, but don't spoil the market."

The Dyke Stakes was the third race, and, directly after the second contest was over, Reggie was busy in Tattersall's. Cocky and I put a trifle on Blue Blazes, and then met Anthony Fuller on the steps of the Stand. Presently we were joined by Reggie, who looked rather white and nervous.

"Well," said Anthony, "what have you got on?"

"About six hundred," replied Reggie.

"Averaging what?" asked Anthony.

"Eight to one," answered Reggie. "But, I say, Tony, I met a man just now, who told me Blue Blazes hadn't a ghost of a chance, and that White Rhino was a dead snip."

"Indeed?" said Anthony contemptuously; "was it Mr Trainer Jobbins! Go and try and get another fifty on Blue Blazes."

Reggie went off, and when he returned the horses had started. He caught me by the arm as the horses came into the straight, with White Rhino holding a clear lead. I am sure that he could not see, for he held on like a blind man. What is that creeping up under the rails?—"Blue Blazes! Blue Blazes!" roars the

crowd, and almost before we are aware of it, up goes his number, three, on the top of the telegraph board. Reggie was stunned for a moment, and then grasped Anthony with both his hands.

"You're a good fellow, Tony, I'll try and make it up to you. I've got a splendid thing for the next race."

"No, young feller," said Anthony, "in two hours the yacht starts for Cowes!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINTH

AT COWES

COWES, in the days of which I am writing, was a very different place from what it is at the end of the nineteenth century. The Royal Yacht Squadron was looked upon as the most exclusive body in the world, and indeed it is now, only it often excludes the right candidates and admits the wrong ones. In bygone times it would have been impossible for a man, who simply bought a yacht to qualify for admission, to have been elected, nor would any member have, on the strength of his privileges at the Castle, taken upon himself the profession of a shipping agent or hotel tout. And as caps are all unknowingly apt to fit, I take leave to state that my remarks do not apply to the Royal Yacht Squadron, but to the Imperial Sailing Club, Nova Zembla. When the *Cærulea*, with our party, including the regenerated Reggie, was brought to her moorings in Cowes Roads, we found the R.Y.S. Regatta in full swing. Nowhere do I think can such a varied and brilliant scene be witnessed, as on the beautiful Solent during the Cowes week. Ninety per cent of the participators in the marine carnival do not care a brass nail about yacht-racing, but most of them do like yacht-cruising. Even nowadays, thank goodness! Cowes has not yet descended to the level of Henley, and its Regatta is

still free from the revolting debauchery, which for three days annually desecrates one of the fairest reaches on the Upper Thames. But excursion steamers and cheap railway trips have, nevertheless, changed the aspect of affairs very considerably. Why on earth, by the way, did they ever construct railways in the Isle of Wight? They were absolutely uncalled for, and, indeed, if I am not very much mistaken, only one line—that from Ryde to Ventnor—pays its shareholders for their investment. The old coaches were good enough, both for islanders and “overners,” as the natives contemptuously style the inferior dwellers on the mainland. Nor are the railways conducted on civilised principles. Trains wander through fields, ready apparently to pick up mushroom-pickers or haymakers, and on one occasion the last train never left Cowes on Firework Night, because the station-master was incapable of starting the Newport express by himself—all his satellites being pyrotechnically engaged. In the old days it was considered *infra dig.* for yacht owners to live on their vessels, and consequently fabulous prices were asked and given for the meanest accommodation during the famous Seven Days, on the profits of which the good Cowesers lived for the remaining fifty-one weeks of the year. Yet it must not be supposed that the letters of apartments and lodgings reaped their golden harvest in all cases. I know from the lips of one of the best and truest of women, now, alas! gathered into the Garner of the Good, that the bad debts made by hotel proprietors were astounding in their magnitude. Great ladies would take the most expensive rooms, live on the fat of the island, and depart without settling their accounts. Sometimes, after several

applications, the bills would be settled many months afterwards, generally just before Regatta time was coming again. Others never paid at all, and these were the worst of all, not because they did not pay, but because when asked why they did not return to their former quarters, they would say: "Oh! we were so shamefully imposed upon!" or, "The food was unfit to eat." It may be asked why the hotel proprietors did not invoke the aid of the law? The answer is simple. They were afraid to do so in their own interests, lest their suing the Duchess of This or the Countess of That, should create prejudice against them in high circles. But living on yachts became ere long the fashion—thanks to the very sensible example shown by the Prince of Wales—who soon demonstrated that the comforts of home-life were not incompatible with a sojourn on the blue waters of the Solent. The Heir Apparent was also mainly responsible for the unwritten law that yachting costume should be considered full dress, at all but the most solemn functions at Osborne, and, under his beneficent patronage, the peaked cap at Cowes is as recognised a head-covering, as is the horrible "chimney-pot" in Pall Mall.

I am afraid that the undoing of Cowes is mainly to be attributed to the "Special Correspondent." In early times a bare record of the yacht-racing, and an inaccurate catalogue of visitors to the Castle, furnished by gracious permission of the Mahdi in disguise, keeping watch over the portals of the Club, were the only records to be found in the Press. Of course papers like the *Field*, and *Land and Water*, had ample and accurate descriptions of the various sailing matches, but the social conditions of the week

were altogether unnoticed. Not that they would not, if accurately detailed, have afforded considerable entertainment, but the fact of the matter is, that until the advent of the "Special Correspondent," few people interested themselves in the doings at Lady Grasshopper's dance, or recked whether Lady Ant wore black silk stockings and a yellow gown on the Parade on Sunday morning. At Cowes, during this first visit, we made the acquaintance of two pioneers of the New Journalism—one was Mr Horace Hall, the "Special" of the *Daily Argus*, the other, Lady Boome, the gifted wife of a high functionary of State. Their methods were entirely different, but their object in giving publicity to privacy was almost identical. Mr Hall, who was really a clever writer, would make bricks without straw with a facility which would have caused him to be hugely envied in the days when the Egyptians were causing the Israelites to devote their attention to the uses of clay. He was naturally indolent, and knew as much about a yacht as I do about a balloon, but his articles were full of colour, and he had a knack not only of using picturesque language, but also of bringing his readers almost into conversation with personages whom he himself barely knew by sight. He never demeaned himself by searching for information in the back-kitchen, but he always had two or three less fastidious grubbers after news in his pay, and their tittle-tattle, combined with his own ready wit, made the "flap-doodle," as he called it, with which he fed the British Public. Of Mr Hall, several entertaining anecdotes were told. On one occasion he was despatched by his employer, a man of economical principles, to give an account of some festivities at

Eastbourne. Mr Hall performed his task and duly sent in his little account for personal expenses. The employer of literary labour scanned the bill with the minuteness of the microscope.

"How's this?" he exclaimed. "Here's Hall charging a first-class return ticket to Eastbourne. Put him down a third return, Barker," he shouted to his secretary.

"But there are no third returns, sir, available for the following day," said Mr Barker humbly.

"Oh, indeed," snorted the employer. "Well, put him down two thirds. It will warn Hall not to be so extravagant in future."

Hall, who was waiting for the employer's initials on his *addition*, in order to draw the money from the cashier, cursed heartily when he saw the correction in the matter of the railway ticket, the more so as he had invited a friend to drink with him at Ludgate Hill bar. "Mean old beast!" he grumbled, "I suppose he'd like me to travel in a cattle truck." The friend consoled him as well as he was able, and after three or four potations Hall got quite jolly, and at last exclaimed: "After all, I'm two thirds in."

"Two thirds in!" repeated his friend; "what do you mean?"

"Why, I went down to Eastbourne with a pass, of course," said Hall with a wink.

In the course of years, Hall's children grew up, and presently his charming daughter became engaged to be married. The wedding-day was fixed, and Hall found himself saddled with all those little expenses other than marriage gifts, which fall upon a devoted parent. He cast about him to relieve the strain upon his none too well laden purse. Good

fortune smiled upon him in one particular instance, for he was told off to describe a Viticultural Exhibition of magnitude. At this show a brand new champagne was being exploited by the London agent. Hall was not long in finding him out, and having sampled the vintage, exclaimed: "That's the very stuff I should like to drink at my daughter's wedding."

"Nothing easier, sir," said the agent, "if only——"

"Not a word," interrupted Hall, "but——" he tapped a copy of the *Daily Argus*, which he held in his hand, "if—you understand—half-a-dozen cases. Here's my address."

"It's a bet," said the agent.

"But," said Hall, "you'll also have to send on six to my employer at once." Which was done.

The next morning the *Argus* declared, *vid* Hall, that Messrs Reams & Pernay's champagne was the frothing feature of the Viticultural Exhibition, and Mr Hall was congratulated by the employer, who never referred to *his* cases, on the ability of his article.

Shortly after this episode, the employer said to his secretary, "Mr Barker, I've received this morning a personal letter, which pleases me very greatly, because it shows that gratitude is still a known quantity in the composition of poor humanity. Read it, Mr Barker, and profit by the principles inculcated in the worthy writer's style."

Mr Barker read as follows:—

LASHINGTON MEWS,
TIKUM STREET, BAYSWATER, W.

HONOURED SIR—Some years ago, when you resided in this neighbourhood, you were graciously pleased to bestow your respected patronage on him, who ventures to address you. I

remember with gratitude the Broughams, Landaus, and Victorias, which you were pleased to order of me from time to time before you set up those Equipages, which are now the admiration of all London and the suburbs. Honoured Sir, thanks, I am sure, to your never-to-be-forgotten help, I have prospered in a humble position as you have in a Noble and Elevated Sphere. But as you know, sir, increased custom entails increased expenditure. Quite recently I have had to rebuild my entire establishment, and I tremble to think what would happen to my poor wife and family should my investment prove a failure. I need scarcely say that I was obliged to *borrow the building money at ruinous percentage*, but I still keep good heart. All I need is Extra Publicity. Will you, sir, in the generosity of your enlightened mind, deign to send a representative of your Matchless Journal to report on the equine accommodation which I now am enabled to offer to the Metropolis? If you would so far condescend, *my gratitude would be greater than ever*.—Your obedient, humble servant,

JOHN SPINDLE.

“That’s what I call an admirable letter, Mr Barker, said the employer. “His request involves possibly a direct breach of our advertising rules, but that, no doubt, can be remedied later on. I like gratitude, and shall accede to this good man’s demand. Whom could you suggest to attend to the matter?”

“Well, sir,” replied Mr Barker, who had smelt a rat, “I should say that Hall would be the very man.”

“Just so,” said the employer complacently. “Hall let it be, and tell him we want none of that sarcasm in which he is too prone to indulge. Let Spindle’s establishment be done as it should be done, in a kindly and appreciative vein of superior English.”

Mr Barker conveyed the great man’s wishes to Hall, who was delighted with the commission. “I’ve got the champagne,” he exclaimed, “and now I’ve got the carriages. It took Spindle a long time to copy that letter, Barker,” he added, with a reflective smile.

Mr Hall, though he constantly referred to others, never alluded to himself in print. He preferred the sacred cloak of anonymity which was thrown around him by his Employer, and if he had been asked to sign his articles in the *Daily Argus* he would have raised objections to such an unheard-of journalistic innovation, for signed articles found no favour then, either with editors or contributors, the editorial "We" and the special "I" covering virtues and sins alike.

Now Lady Boome was of a very different turn of mind. Her idea was of the Eclipse order—Lady Boome first, and the rest nowhere. At first the High and Mighty could not understand how it came about that Lady Boome's most infinitesimal proceedings were always chronicled in print. If Lady Boome issued cards for a dinner-party, the names of all the guests were given to the world. Did her ladyship go to Brighton for four-and-twenty hours, the fact was made into a paragraph. In short, by carefully studying the papers, one might almost have ascertained what time Lady Boome went to bed, and whether she had eggs and bacon, or kidneys and truffles for breakfast. Nor were Lady Boome's endeavours to gain notoriety restricted to the higher social functions. On the contrary, the newspaper student would learn that Lady Boome had presided over a meeting of Poor Mothers, who had borne twins; that Lady Boome was getting up a Fund for sending Sixty Semptresses of the East End to Norway; and that Lady Boome had written to the Bishop of London, urging that free fuel should be supplied to the peripatetic baked potato and chestnut-dealers of London. It must not be supposed that her ladyship gave nothing in exchange for this

constant display of her name. On the contrary, she bartered very excellent and exclusive news—always indifferently written on half slips of notepaper in red ink—with the various editors of her acquaintance. Her own position and that of her husband enabled her to collect scraps of information with the unerring precision of a Parisian *chiffonnière*. Presently Society (the big “S” society) began to comprehend that Lady Boome was a power in the land, and that to be numbered among her friends and acquaintances always insured a favourable notice in the fashionable intelligence. Editors also discovered that Lady Boome’s contributions were, in the growing craze for personal *persiflage*, very valuable items, and her ladyship’s slips of paper were rewarded with other slips of paper of more material worth. Of course Lady Boome soon had scores of imitators, but no rivals. Her English might be sloppy and her handwriting execrable, but her facts were indisputable, and she did not know how to pen a libel. Lady Boome never, moreover, said anything ill-natured, except perhaps on one occasion, when a certain playwright, who in earlier years had travelled in “samples,” asked her: “Can you draw a penny-a-line across country?” “Yes,” replied Lady Boome, “when the hunting’s fair, but not after a bagman.” The dramatist dried up. He felt the taunt all the more keenly, perhaps, because it was delivered at a literary conversation, and among many writers he passed as an aristocrat, many of the characters in his plays having to all appearance walked straight out of the pages of “Burke’s Peerage” or the *London Journal*. When, therefore, Lady Boome alluded to “a bagman,” the *littérateurs* soon ran the playwright to earth, and

having dug up his antecedents, killed him unmercifully in the open.

There was at this time at Cowes a very amiable and popular lady, the Honourable Mrs Twister, with her two beautiful daughters, whose brilliant complexions and fine figures showed them to be the fairer daughters of the fair matron. Mrs Twister was the recognised head of the *beau monde*, and not Mr Adolphus Le Monde himself was more exacting in sustaining the laws of the privileged Few. Mrs Twister, her daughters, and her courtiers were wont on a fine afternoon to sit in her elevated garden, and survey the passing crowd with critical eyes. Happy indeed was the individual who was privileged to greet the Queen of Fashion. Happier he, or she, who was bidden to join the sacred circle! Now it grieves me to state that although Mrs Twister's magnificence greatly impressed most human beings, it had a contrary effect on two or three gentlemen, whose sense of practical joking overcame their sense of decorum. Chief among these scoffers was Lord Albert Bowline, whose "larks" when a junior officer in the Navy have since developed in him those astute traits, which are only found in born diplomatists—traits such as my grandfather, Lord MacWashington, had not transmitted to me. With Bertie Bowline were associated two or three other jest-lovers, Prince Rupert of Caucasia, Sir Highcum Flick, and George Pendleton, and one fine night they perpetrated an outrage of singular audacity. How they managed it I know not, but certain it is that when the unfortunate Mrs Twister retired to rest, she found her widow's couch occupied by a stalwart young jackass, and the screams with which she greeted this discovery were drowned by a

chorus of "Hee-haws," which proceeded from outside. There was no clue to the offenders, but many had their suspicions as to the authors of the crime. Shortly afterwards, very late at night, or rather early in the morning, a covered carriage drove up to Mrs Twister's residence, and a thundering rap resounded on the front door, and on the frightened butler appearing, he was informed that the Queen desired Mrs Twister's presence immediately on important business at Osborne. The butler summoned the lady's-maid, and the latter conveyed the intelligence to her mistress. Although Mrs Twister was retiring to rest, she was far too unsuspicious, and altogether too loyal a subject, to disregard the Royal command. So, as quickly as possible, she arrayed herself in her best, and, after explaining her departure to her daughters, entered the vehicle, the door of which was held open by a footman in handsome livery, and was presently being whirled through the quiet streets of the town at an astounding pace. All of a sudden the horses were brought to a full stop in a lonely road, and Mrs Twister began to think that the era of highwaymen was not passed, when she was relieved by seeing that a policeman with a bull's eye was throwing a light on her.

"What is the matter, constable?" she asked.

"I'm sorry to say, ma'am," replied the man in blue, "that I must arrest you, your coachman, and your footman for furious driving."

"Good Heavens!" cried the affrighted Mrs Twister, "I'm on my way to Osborne by command of the Queen."

"Can't help that, ma'am," responded the policeman, "you'll have to come along with me. Now

coachman," he said to the driver, "go home at once to this lady's house. I'll get inside and see that she don't escape."

The carriage again set off at a terrible pace, and poor Mrs Twister vainly tried to bribe, threaten, or cajole the constable. He was like adamant. "I've got my dooty to do, ma'am," he said in answer to all she said, "and my dooty I'll do."

Just before Mrs Twister's cottage was reached, the carriage stopped, and the policeman requested her to get out and accompany him to her domicile. Mrs Twister, more dead than alive, obeyed, but just as she got inside her own gates, she missed the guardian of the peace, and heard the carriage driving off, amid loud shouts of laughter. The unfortunate lady had been sold again, for the coachman was Prince Rupert of Caucasia, the footman Sir Highcum Flick, and the immaculate policeman Lord Albert Bowline. How Mrs Twister explained her midnight adventure to her household was never known, nor how the true version of it got whispered about on the Castle Lawn. I fancy that Bertie Bowline could not keep the joke to himself. Anyway, he told Charlie Larkhall, and Cocky told me, and that is how the yarn comes to be set forth here.

Bowline was the most inveterate practical joker whom I have ever come across. He even beat Larkhall, and that is saying a good deal. One of his favourite subjects was his own aunt, Lady Boadicea Black, the wife of an eminent politician. On one occasion at a reception given by her ladyship, he insisted on greeting all her guests, despite her endeavours to welcome them. Getting in front of her, he would exclaim: "My poor aunt is very unwell,

and has asked me to do the honours for her. So pleased to see you." "But I haven't, Bertie," cried his aunt behind him. "Don't mind what she says," the villain would cry, "she's not herself to-night." And for over an hour, he kept his unfortunate aunt penned in a corner, and on tenterhooks of vexation. Once Bertie caused Lady Boadicea to be stopped in the Row for furious riding by a mounted policeman (perhaps he took a hint from this official's behaviour when he arrested Mrs Twister), to whom he asserted that he had been nearly killed when crossing the ride by Albert Gate. When Lady Boadicea learned from the constable who was her accuser, she boiled over with indignation, and Bowline had to keep out of her way for a fortnight. But the very next time that he met his aunt, at the Duke of Middlesex's ball, he, when she wished to go home, having previously sent away Lady Boadicea's carriage, tenderly escorted her to a four-wheeled cab. Then telling her to draw up the glasses on account of the chill air of the morning, he paid the cabman and directed him to convey his fare to the British Museum. And in the pale grey dawn Lady Boadicea found herself in Bloomsbury instead of Mayfair. But it must not be supposed that the quips and cranks of the jesters were only directed against defenceless women. On the contrary, their principal butts were the men, who posed as Superior Beings. At one country house, they got a cock, and put him between the ceiling and the rafters of an aesthete, who boasted that he could regulate his slumbers by the songs of the birds, only on this occasion Highcum Flick was deservedly punished, for he had forgotten that he slept immediately above the victim, and chanticleer called him as soon as the other.

THE SCARLET CITY

At another mansion in the Midlands, Prince Rupert persuaded a luckless wight to wear a kilt at dinner, and later, when he was talking metaphysics over the wine, induced him to be blindfolded in order to demonstrate the theory of thought-reading. In fact it was a game of blind man's buff. "Who touched you then?" asked one and the other, stroking the metaphysician's naked knees. He would guess rightly or wrongly, but he never reckoned, that all the while, his legs were being anointed with powdered burnt cork, nor did he realise the fact till he had joined the ladies, whose unstinted merriment caused the abashed thought-reader to fly upstairs, and seek the seclusion of his bedroom, whence he presently emerged without the garb of old Gaul, and in the less pretentious trows.

But to return to Cowes. We had enjoyed ourselves thoroughly, perhaps no one so much as Charlie Larkhall, because his adorable Princess Pauline Rabanoff had been his constant companion. The Anglo-Russian Alliance was stronger than ever, and Cocky was never tired of denouncing the folly of the Crimean War, till one morning at breakfast Anthony Fuller exclaimed! "I say, Charlie, if you'd been at Balaclava or the Alma, I suppose you'd have surrendered yourself prisoner?"

"No," replied Cocky with great dignity, "but I should have tried to have saved the lives of my uncle and cousin, who were both bayoneted at the battle of Inkerman."

"I beg your pardon," said Anthony, holding out his hand, which Charlie shook warmly, but he never talked of the Crimea again. I remember the incident well, because it was at this very breakfast, shortly

after Cocky had spoken, that the Wicked Uncle threw down the *Times* with an oath.

"Hallo!" I said, "what's the matter?"

He pointed to a heading in the paper. It ran: "Failure of Messrs Gorton & Goole." I knew what he meant in an instant. Gorton & Goole were the bankers who held heavy mortgages on our little estate. George and I were probably ruined.

CHAPTER THIRTIETH

WHICH TREATS OF THINGS MORE OR LESS DRAMATIC

THE blow, which fell so unexpectedly at Cowes, was heavier than could have been expected. Of course the creditors of Gorton & Goole foreclosed, and on our property being put up for sale, the price realised barely sufficed to pay the charges on the estate, so much had land depreciated in value since my father and his father before him had raised the wind. My little stock of ready money, also in the hands of Gorton & Goole, had been annexed too, and I was practically penniless. Reggie Gregory insisted upon my borrowing a couple of hundred pounds of his Brighton winnings, and Cocky Larkhall repeatedly offered me his signature. The Wicked Uncle, who was in no way to blame, was also heavily hit by the failure of the bankers, and had little more than his half-pay to live upon. It was estimated that when the lawyers, accountants, and other cormorants had been satisfied, Gorton and Goole would possibly pay their clients eleven-pence three-farthings in the pound. George would probably have to leave the Navy. It was then that the cruelty with which Flaherty had robbed me was realised in all its bitterness. With my aunt's money

I could have lived well, and perhaps luxuriously. The only person who did not seem in the least cast down was Anthony Fuller.

"Cheer up, young feller," he cried. "It's no use looking for cream when the cat's licked out the jug. But there are plenty of cows waiting to be milked. In the meantime, you've got to find some way of getting some bread and cheese."

"Well, Tony," I said despondently, "what do you advise me to do? I'm no good for a clerk, I can't write shorthand, or add up figures, and I know nothing about book-keeping or double entry."

"No," he acquiesced, "you're not built for a clerk, that's certain. And in my line of business you wouldn't be worth your keep."

"What is your line of business, Tony?" I asked.

"Minding the affairs of other people," he answered. "Sometimes there are trumps in the game, but as often as not the court cards are against you. Now, I'll tell you what I think you might have a go at, and that's scribbling. If Mr Hall and Lady Boome can get ~~their~~ stuff into print, why shouldn't you? I don't know much about the game myself, but besides that, there's a bit to be made at play-writing, and from what Cocky Larkhall tells me, you've got a turn that way. Anyhow, you couldn't spin out greater rot than you'll find at most of the theatres."

I took Anthony's advice. For over a year-and-a-half I went steadily to work spoiling paper by the ream, but, although I sent in my effusions to every conceivable kind of publication, I never succeeded in hitting the taste of the editors. All this time Anthony Fuller stood by me like a stalwart friend, and Cocky Larkhall and Reggie Gregory were

always ready to help me, when they had a few pounds to spare, which was not very often, for Cocky's allowance was precarious, and Reggie, despite the Goodwood lesson, was always plunging on the turf. The only one of us who seemed to keep his wits about him was Anthony. And one morning I received the news that George had been killed in an affray with slavers on the coast of Madagascar. No details as to his death were forthcoming. All that could be gathered was that he had landed with a boat's crew to capture an Arab dhow, which the owner had run ashore; that the Englishmen had been beaten off; that while retreating George had been seen to fall, and that subsequently, though his captain landed an armed force, no trace of poor George could be discovered beyond a broken sword, which was known to belong to him. It was conjectured that he had been cut down where he fell, and his body thrown into the sea. The loss of George caused the liveliest grief to me, and also to Uncle Philip. I used to lie awake at night thinking of my brother, whom I had seen so rarely of late years, and in my dreams he was always present with such startling reality, that when I awoke I could scarcely believe that I should see him no more. His death caused me to feel unutterably miserable, and all the kindness of Anthony and my other friends could not rouse me from my state of despondent lethargy. I lived in Ebury Street, at the end more remote from civilisation, and day by day, and week by week, my little store of money dwindled and dwindled, and my mass of returned M.S. grew larger and larger. The winding up of Gorton and Goole afforded substantial sustenance to the gentle-

men of the long robe and long fingers, but their unhappy creditors never got a glimpse of their assets. Anthony Fuller in vain tried to raise my spirits. At the most, I was occasionally induced to accompany him to St James's Park, where I would sit moodily watching the wild fowl on the Ornamental Water. Then I would go home, and write the most dismal prose and the most funereal verse. An undertaker's mute would not have found me a cheerful companion. Anthony would try and enliven me with stories of the world, but they fell upon my ears like the idle babblings of an infant. The only time that I enjoyed was when I sank into my heavy somnolence, and dreamed that George and I were playing together again in the Sydney Gardens at Bath. But one night there came to me a vision as I slept. It was the figure of Lady Beatrice as I had seen her at the ball in Carlton House Terrace, and she looked on me with a tender and lovely smile, and said, "Remember the Coral Hand!" I awoke with a great start, with the delicious feeling that some great load had been lifted from my brain, some barrier had been swept away, so that my reason had been restored to me. It was still dark in the room, but I rose, and rushing to the window threw it open. The dawn was spreading over the heavens with streaks of violet, and amber, and pink, and as the fresh sharp air of the morning struck my brow, I sank on my knees, and thanked my Creator, with tears of joy running down my cheeks, that He had restored me to my sense of manhood. And in my prayers I whispered the name of the saint of my vision, she, who could never be more to me than holy in my heart.

When Anthony came to see me that morning, he was surprised to find a cheerful man instead of the misanthrope of the day before.

"By the walls of Jericho!" he cried, "I'm glad to see this change, young feller. And talking of Jericho reminds me that I'm going to take you, if you'll come, to Jerusalem."

"To Jerusalem!" I exclaimed, "well, it's not far from the Dead Sea, out of which I have just emerged. I'm ready—do I go as a Crusader?"

"I don't know much about Crusaders," returned Anthony, "but I believe that they were very respectable chaps, and their wives very virtuous ladies, for they stayed at home and were always faithful spouses to their absent lords. In the time of the Crusaders divorce courts weren't needed, nor private detectives either. But there's no crusading about me. The Jerusalem I'm going to escort you to is in the east but it's in the east of London. This is what the business is. My friend, Mr Hiram Sidon, runs the Phœnician Music Hall—I mean Theatre of Cosmopolitan Varieties—in Shoreditch, and he wants a nautical sketch, which shall run as close to a stage-play without being one, as may prevent him from being prosecuted by his neighbour, Mr Simon Naboth of the Vineyard playhouse. It struck me that that little operetta of yours, called 'Jack and Jemima,' would be just the thing for him, with most of the talk out. The songs are all right, and with some hornpipes and Irish jigs, it ought to go."

At first I felt grieved to think that my little piece, which I had written on the model of "The Wakeman," should be hacked and sliced to suit the taste of Mr

Sidon's patrons, but in my new-born turn of mind, I was disposed to look upon everything from a cheerful point of view.

"All right, Tony," I said, "I'm awfully obliged to you. I only hope that Sidon will approve."

"Of course he will," answered Anthony; "only you mustn't expect very large fees for it. I don't think that Sidon will stand more than three half-crowns a night, but if you don't mind my telling him that you're a lord's grandson, he'd probably run to ten bob."

"Tell him anything you like," I said, as I hunted up the brown-paper-covered manuscript, which had visited the stage doors of most of the West End theatres. Five minutes afterwards Anthony and I were speeding Eastward ho! as fast as a swift hansom could carry us. We did not drive to the Phœnician Music Hall, because, as Anthony explained, Mr Sidon spent most of the day at his place of business, a large butcher's shop, where he retailed 'Kosher' meat to his numerous co-religionists. Indeed, when we found the proprietor of the Phœnician he was like the king of the nursery ballad, counting up his money in his parlour—he was in his shirt-sleeves, and though without a collar or tie, displayed a diamond as big as a bean in his capacious shirt-front. Anthony Fuller wasted no time with the man of meat and music, but immediately said—

"Let me make you acquainted with my friend, Mr MacWashington Franklyn, the playwright I spoke to you about."

"Glad to see you, sir," observed Mr Sidon, without any cordiality, extending an enormous fist of 'Kosher' meat.

"He's the eldest grandson of the great Lord MacWashington."

"God bless my soul, you don't say so!" exclaimed Mr Sidon, squeezing my hand till my fingers ached. "Proud, sir, most proud to meet you. And how's your noble grandfather?"

"He's dead," broke in Anthony, before I could speak, "Mr Franklyn's his grandson and heir."

"Then, sir," observed Mr Sidon, who, I may remark, spoke excellent English, without any of the Shibboleth of the stage Jew, "you'll be having a handle to your name."

"Rather," returned Anthony, taking up the parable, "he'll be splendidly handled by-and-by. But what about this sketch? Here it is," and he handed my poor little work to the flesher-impresario—"And take my word for it, Sid, it's a corker.—I need say no more."

"Is it patriotic?" asked Mr Sidon.

"It bubbles over with patriotism," replied Anthony. "There's a song in it called, 'The Blood-Red Cross of St George,' which would make the fortune of any piece."

"I like that title," said Mr Sidon, "'The Blood-Red Cross of St George.'—Have a drink and a cigar?"

Mr Sidon's whisky and tobacco were unimpeachable. After a pause he said—

"Well, I'd like to try this sketch out of respect for your right honourable grandfather."

"An excellent sentiment, Sid," remarked Anthony; "but what do you propose to brass up for the night?"

"I should say five bob a night," replied Mr Sidon.

"And I should say ten," said Anthony calmly.

"Make it seven-and-six and a leg of mutton, or

piece of prime Scotch, every Sabbath day," returned the butcher.

"Make it pig's fry and pork sausages!" cried Anthony contemptuously. "Half a quid, or we move on to Naboth. He knows a good thing when it's offered to him."

"You're very hard, Mr Fuller," sighed Mr Sidon, "but I've taken a liking to the piece, and if you say nine bob, I'll say done."

"Nine-and-six," retorted Anthony, "is my lowest figure."

"Nine-and-three," said the butcher imploringly.

"I'll toss you," cried Anthony, producing a shilling. "Nine-and-six or nine-and-three. You cry." He spun the coin.

"Woman?" said Mr Sidon.

"It's man," observed Anthony.

"Three's!" said Mr Sidon quickly.

"Three's be d——d!" exclaimed Anthony. "I wonder you're not ashamed of yourself to try that caper with me."

"I'm never ashamed of saving a bit when I can," replied the unabashed Meat Merchant, "but as I like that song, 'The Red Nose of St George,' I'll say nine-and-six."

"You've got a bargain," said Anthony. "Give me a bit of paper, and a sixpenny stamp, and I'll draw out the letter of agreement."

"You don't expect me to pay for the stamp?" urged Mr Sidon.

"I'll toss you for it," said Anthony. He did, and won. Mr Sidon sighed heavily, and pressed us to have another drink. *

After putting his name to the letter he said: "Well,

you go and talk the matter over with Shadrach, my stage-manager. You'll find him round at the hall." We went out into the shop. "And," continued Mr Sidon, "let me beg of you to take back a saddle of Welsh mutton to the West. You won't match it in Bond Street." And before we could say "Yes" or "No," he had the meat packed up with marvellous celerity in a rush basket. Then he shook hands with us, sighed heavily again, and retired into his parlour, whence the jingle of coins assured us that he was again counting his takings.

"A rum card," observed Anthony, "he'd part willingly with anything except shekels. He gives away tons of meat in the year to the poor, Jews and Christians alike, but he'd skin a mouse if he thought he could get a farthing for its hide."

We found Mr Shadrach superintending the gyrations of a number of exceedingly dishevelled and unprepossessing damsels on the dirty stage of the Phœnician; Anthony, who had evidently been there before, guiding me through several dingy passages.

Just after we reached the boards, Mr Shadrach mopped his face with a red handkerchief, and addressed his pupils in this curt speech, 'Yer a lot of bloomin' cuckoos. Now cut away 'ome, and be hanged to the lot of yer.'

The young women greeted Mr Shadrach's remarks with great thankfulness, and scuttled off like so many rabbits. As they did so, Mr Shadrach turned, and recognising Anthony, politely raised his very shiny hat, displaying a bald head fringed with scarlet hair. He boasted a waxed moustache to match. His nose had been broken and was of indefinite shape.

"Ah! Misther Fuller," he exclaimed, "ith's dread-

ful 'avin' to try and edicate such a pack of blitherin' hignoramuses as them gurls. Vot can I do for yer, Misther Fuller?"

Anthony explained our errand, and having introduced me to Mr Shadrach as the grandson of the Lord Viscount MacWashington, whereat the stage-manager swept the boards with his castor, he handed over the precious manuscript to the man in authority.

Mr Shadrach glanced at the pages hurriedly. "Too much cackle, sir," he observed, "too much cackle, but me and my little bit of plumbago 'll soon set that right." Here he flourished an enormous carpenter's pencil, which I subsequently learned he used indiscriminately, as an instrument of correction and as a writing implement. "As to the music," continued Mr Shadrach, "there's a little feller in the orchestra who, sh'welp me never, ith a born genious; Mothart and Mendelthon rolled inter vun. And now, shentlemen, I must fly becos I've got an appointment with Mithter Vinkleberg, the great American Freak agent. Rely on me, shentlemen, rely on me—Good morning," and he disappeared as quickly as had his pupils.

I confess that when I beheld my little sketch I was utterly unable to recognise it. Mr Shadrach's plumbago had indeed levelled all the dialogue, with the ease of a thirty-pounder gun shelling a brick fort. In order to keep within the letter of the law, the situations had been altered so that only two characters were on the stage at the same time, and Mr Sidon, true to his patriotic instincts, had renamed the piece "The Pet of Britannia, or Three Cheers for the Red, White and Blue." Mr Tobit, the young member of the orchestra, had certainly contrived to get some pretty melodies together, whether

THE SCARLET CITY

begged, borrowed, stolen, or invented, I cannot say, and the song, "The Blood-Red Cross of St George," met with vociferous applause, as did a hornpipe ballet, executed by Mr Shadrach's pupils, with very little on except silk Union Jacks round their hips. The "Pet of Britannia" held the boards for the prodigious period of six weeks, a record run at the Phœnician. I regularly received my fees, which were paid every Saturday night, Mr Sidon insisting that I should fetch them myself. The money was always forthcoming in a paper-bag, and, I noticed, generally contained a surprising number of worn silver coins. At the close of the run Mr Sidon offered me six pounds and half a sheep for all my rights in the sketch, but Anthony would not allow me to accept this generous offer.

"Depend upon it, that old fox Sid has been negotiating with some West End manager to bring out "The Pet," to say nothing of the provinces. Besides, there are the publishing rights, in which I'm your partner, Jack," he said with a twinkle.

"My partner—what do you mean?" I asked, fairly astonished.

"Only that I've given Jonathan Tobit a fiver and an old dress-suit for his music. He's a clever fellow, Tobit, but as vain as a peacock. He implored me to write five hundred, as the price, in the agreement. 'Think of my reputation, Mr Fuller,' he cried, with tears in his eyes. 'Well,' I said, 'shall I put down a monkey and fifty new dress suits?' 'Oh! Mr Fuller, he whined, 'for Gawd's sake, don't mention garments to me. For my part, I wish London was the Garden of Eden, and then there'd be no clothes, and there wouldn't be that stinking Petticoat Lane.'"

As usual, Anthony's perception was correct. Mr

Sidon had arranged with the proprietor of the Piccadilly Pantechicon for the transfer of the "Pet of Britannia" to that far-famed place of entertainment, "with new and increased effects," as the bills put it, while, to my intense surprise, Miss Evelyn Cavendish, late of the Spree Theatre, was engaged for the part of Jack Lanyard, the hero, to whom is entrusted the singing of "The Blood-Red Cross of St George."

I had not seen Tabby since the day when Anthony Fuller had put her off going to Goodwood and Cowes. That was getting on for three years ago. She had written to me several times, but I never answered her letters, and I was heartily glad to hear that she had gone with an English burlesque company to America, and only hoped that she might stay there for ever and a day. Anthony told me one day that Mrs Bottlestrap still kept the hotel in Bloomsbury, and that her head was more like a brass-topped nail than ever, while her complexion could not have done injustice to the florid brush of Rubens. I confess that this re-appearance of Tabby in my little sketch, filled me with forebodings. Not that Tabby would recognise me as the author, for I wrote under the name of John Freeman. Still the truth would assuredly come out sooner or later.

"You'd better face the music, young feller," said Anthony. "Tabby won't eat you. By the way, I've arranged that we're to have thirty shillings a night for the piece—I'll take ten and you the twenty. That's only fair. Also I've given Joskins, the publisher, the refusal of bringing out the music. He's a cunning old beggar, and says he won't do anything till after the first night. Well, if it's a success, he'll find his

'Ante' raised. I'm told, Jack, that Tabby's come out wonderfully. Old Clacton's had her taught singing, dancing, and elocution, and a heap of things, and Tabby, being no fool, has come along like a fire-engine. She's looking more fetching than ever. You just attend rehearsal, if it's only for the sake of showing the minx that you don't care a brass farthing for her or her capers."

I followed Anthony's advice, and the next morning accompanied him to the Pantechicon, or, as it is commonly called, the "Tech." I could not help contrasting the splendour of its interior with the garish decorations of Mr Sidon's hall. The stage was large; there was a luxuriously-furnished green-room; and the dressing-rooms were clean and well ventilated. Certainly Mr Tumbledew, the manager and part proprietor, did everything he could to promote the comfort of his *employées* as well as his patrons. Mr Tumbledew was a fat, dark-whiskered man of uncertain age, who, like Anthony in his early youth, affected velvet collars to his coat. He always wore a white waistcoat, morning and evening in winter, spring, summer, and autumn, and was never without a gârdenia in his button-hole. I soon learned that he was aware that I was the grandson of the illustrious Lord MacWashington.

"It was my privilege, Mr Franklyn, to meet your distinguished ancestor at the houses of many great noblemen when——" and here he gave a prodigious sigh—"I was a youth, hoping to embrace a more ennobling profession than this. But *noblesse oblige* us, as they say in French."

This was not bad, on the part of Mr Tumbledew, for it was well known that he began life as a

potboy, and rose to affluence by marrying the widow of his employer, a lady old enough to be his mother.

"Yes," continued Mr Tumbledew, "I knew Lord MacWashington intimately—would that he were with us now!"

I shuddered, and possibly so did my grandfather in his grave, at the possibility of that lamp of diplomacy meeting his descendant on the stage of a music hall in conversation with a man, who had not so many years before been scouring pewter-pots in the Borough. However, while we were chatting, Miss Evelyn Cavendish came suddenly upon us, so quickly and quietly that neither of us perceived her approach. Mr Tumbledew turned to her with outstretched lavender-kidded hands.

"My dear Miss Cavendish, I am your slave now and for ever. Permit me to present the author of this charming, breezy sketch. Mr MacWashington Franklyn, grandson of——"

"What, you, Jack!" cried Tabby, "well, I am astounded!"

"Oh, you know one another," observed Mr Tumbledew, who seemed rather annoyed at being done out of the honour of making us personally acquainted.

"Clear there, clear!" he shouted in stentorian tones.

"Well, Jack, and how do you think I'm looking after all these years?" asked Tabby, sinking into a chair by the prompter's table. She had no reason to hear me speak. I knew that she read my answer in my eyes. She was simply a glorified being as compared with herself of a few years back.

"You're splendid as ever!" I cried enthusiastically.

"Mind, Jack," observed Anthony Fuller, who was standing by, "or you'll be on fire."

He pointed with a twinkle to the flaring gas T-piece to which my hat was perilously near. I knew his meaning, and shrugged my shoulders.

CHAPTER

TABBY RE-APPEARS

THIRTY-FIRST

—THE IBIS OPENS

THANKS to the spirited singing and dancing of Miss Evelyn Cavendish, "The Pet of Britannia" proved to be a triumphant success. Tabby made a capital sailor boy, and the strength and purity of her voice astonished not only myself but the usually unsurprisable (if I may coin the word) Tony—"By Jupiter!" he exclaimed, when Tabby had been encored three times for her rendering of the Blood-Red Cross of St George, "that Bottlestrap wench is no frog."

"No frog, what do you mean?" I asked testily.

"She don't croak, young feller, as you do sometimes," was Tony's reply, and he proceeded in his own husky voice to warble the refrain of the ditty:—

"Under the Cross we'll ever take our stand,
Under the Cross we'll fight by sea or land,
Under the Cross the world we can withstand,
The Blood-Red Cross of St George!"

As Anthony was about to recommence the chorus, there came a knock at the box door, and a red-nosed, white-haired gentleman, with a beard but no moustache, put his head in.

"Ah, come in, Mr Joskins," exclaimed Anthony.
"What can I do for you?"

"I want this piece, especially that song. That girl's a stunner. Must have it out with her portrait on it. Shall set to work to-morrow morning."

"But you haven't got it yet," said Anthony. "Here's the author, and I'm the proprietor of the music."

"First-rate," cried Mr Joskins, "glad to meet you, sir. Now there need be no delay. Here we have an agreement, a stylographic pen, and my cheque-book. What more do we need?"

"A drink," said Anthony laughing.

"True," exclaimed Mr Joskins, touching an electric bell. "A bottle of the best will put us all in a good humour. Now, Mr Fuller, what's your price—you don't want to be messed about with royalties? Name the figure at which I can buy all the publishing rights of 'The Pet of Britannia.' I'll take the acting rights as well, if you like."

"No, thank ye," said Anthony, "there'll be some pretty pickings out of that song, when the pantomimes come round."

"You're a wide-awake chap, and no mistake!" exclaimed Mr Joskins admiringly. "Waiter," he said to the attendant, who then appeared. "A bottle of your oldest Veuve, Cliquot, and open it so that I may see the cork. Bless you," he said as the man vanished, "these rascals have their pockets full of corks—use them among themselves instead of cash." Now, Mr Fuller, my cheque-book's open. What shall we say?"

"Well," said Anthony slowly, "I shall ask you £250."

I was paralysed at his audacity. Not so Mr Joskins. He coolly wrote out a cheque without a

moment's deliberation, and handed it to Anthony. "There's your money, sir.~ Don't lose it, cheque uncrossed. Pity*it's after banking hours. Now for the agreement. Here, John," he said to the waiter, who came in with the wine, "just witness the signatures of these gentlemen. Here's a sovereign for the drink. Keep the change for your trouble." In two minutes the document, a printed one, was filled in, and reposing in Mr Joskins's capacious pocket-book, along with his cheques and the stylographic pen.

"Well, gentlemen, here's luck!" cried Mr Joskins, raising his glass and draining it. "And now thank you, and good night. I see Bobton, the photographer, down in the stalls, and I must have Miss Cavendish's likeness at once. Hope we shall often do business," and he shuffled off in a great hurry.

"What an extraordinary man!" I exclaimed. "Does he always do business like that? Fancy any one giving two-fifty for this rotten little sketch."

"No, I can't fancy *any one*," said Anthony, "but, bless your heart, old Joskins can calculate the value of a song, opera, or piece of music, directly he hears it, and mentally he runs up all the likely profits. You see he's got agents all over the world, and in six months' time he'll have flooded Australia with copies of 'The Blood-Red Cross.' Joskins never bargains, and if he sets his mind on buying anything he won't be balked. I daresay he'd have pulled out three-fifty if I'd asked him. One day he went to a sale to buy a second-hand polka. The dealers ran him up to £1000. Everybody laughed, but old Joskins only said, 'I'll get it all back, and more to boot, within a

year.' And he did. On another occasion he went over to Paris, to attend the first night of a new operetta by Offenbach. He couldn't get a seat for love or money. So he waited till the theatre doors opened, and stood at the entrance. By-and-by he saw a rival publisher coming along. 'Hallo! Joskins,' he said, 'you here?' 'Yes,' said Joskins, 'but I can't get a ticket. I'd give a fiver for one.' 'A fiver,' cried the other, who was a bit of a grasper. 'Do you mean it?' 'Rather,' said old Joskins, 'I hate to be done. Light operas ain't in my line of business.' Which at the time was strictly true. 'All right,' said the rival, 'it's a deal on one condition. Tell me what you think of it to-morrow. We'll breakfast at twelve sharp at the Café Anglais.' 'Done!' said old Joskins. 'Here's your flimsy, and that's an engagement.' The next day, punctually at mid-day, he turned up at the Café. 'Well,' said the other publisher, 'how did you enjoy yourself? Rather a dear seat, wasn't it?' 'Not a bit of it,' replied old Joskins, chuckling to himself. 'Well, what do you think of the music?' asked the other. 'First-rate,' answered old Joskins, 'the most tuneful and catchy stuff I've ever heard.' 'I'm glad of that,' said the rival, 'because after reading the notices in the papers, I've just wired to my agent here to buy it at a price.' 'I'm afraid he won't succeed,' said old Joskins with a grin. 'What do you mean?' asked the other. Old Joskins quietly pulled out his pocket-book, and produced the assignment of all the English and American rights of the opera to himself. 'My seat wasn't so dear after all,' he said. It appeared that after the performance he hunted up Offenbach's agent, and never rested till all the preliminaries were arranged,

and, while his rival was snoring in bed, Mr Joskins was handing over the sale-money. He cleared thousands by the deal, and is never tired of talking about his five-pound stall. But come along, Jack, you know we promised Cocky and Reggie to meet them at the Café Regent. It will be a jolly supper party, given in honour of Miss Evelyn Cavendish, *alias* Tabby Bottlestrap."

But it was not at all a jolly party, for among the guests was Sir Percy Spalding, who never left Tabby's side. Was it jealousy that bubbled up within my breast? If not, why did I gaze on the gay baronet with eyes filled with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness? My friends tried to draw me out, and Tabby was particularly gracious, seating me on her left—Sir Percy being on her right—but nothing was of any avail. The laughter, the noise, the popping of the corks, the very sight of Tabby beaming on Sir Percy irritated me beyond control, and presently, pleading a very bad headache, I bade them all good-night.

"Which did he say, headache or heartache?" I heard Sir Percy exclaim as I left the room, and I felt half inclined to return, and brain the jester with a champagne bottle. I spent a restless and unrefreshing night, and vowed a hundred times that I would never see Tabby again.

On the morrow Anthony and I drove to Mr Joskins's bank and cashed his precious draft.

"Now, young feller," said Anthony as he handed me my share, "no larks this time. No doing a flutter at the Tiptoff—though, to be sure, that's impossible, because that establishment has been closed, owing to the meanness of the proprietor in not properly

squaring the gentleman in blue. And that brings me to what I was going to tell you—with this little bit and another little bit, I'm going to start a club."

"Start a club!" I echoed. "What! like the Tiptoff?"

"Not exactly, young feller," replied Anthony. "No; you remember that Pipp's place you used to frequent? Well, that gave me the idea. I've been looking about for a house for a long time, for you may take it for granted I can't afford to pay St James's Street rents. And now I think I've hit upon the very spot. It isn't in a fashionable neighbourhood, but it's central, and as good luck would have it, it's been fitted up for a club in a very modest way. The poor chap who started it hopped the twig before he could get the house open, and now his widow wants to clear out of it. Let's go and inspect the premises; I've got the keys. Remember, Jack, it isn't a palace."

We walked till we came to Piccadilly Circus, and then Tony suddenly dived down a small street on the north side, and presently we were standing before a large door which opened into a tiny hall with a small room on either side. Flinging wide two baize doors beyond, Anthony cried: "Welcome, first member of the Ibis Club!"

"But why Ibis?" I asked, very amused, for I was perfectly certain that Anthony knew as much about Egyptology as I did about stockbroking.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered; "but I went to the Zoo the other day, and saw some long-legged birds which rather took my fancy. They looked so deuced mysterious. One feller particularly pleased me. He stood on one leg for over three-quarters of an hour without shifting or blinking; I know he did,

for I timed him. Then all of a sudden he made a dart and picked up something, which wriggled in his beak. I saw that it was a frog. 'Well, old chap,' I said to the bird, 'I like you. You're a stayer, with plenty of patience in picking up your grub. You're like me, and if this club business comes off, I'll call the house after you if I can find out your blessed name.' A keeper going by told me the creature was an ibis, and that some old-time people used to worship this sort of bird. 'That's good enough for me,' I said to myself; 'I only hope I shall be venerated by some young-time people.' That's why I've called this shanty the Ibis. Now look round, and tell me what you think of it."

We were standing in a large room, evidently made by knocking away walls and propping up others. "The premises used to be two houses," explained Anthony. At one end was a semicircular bar; round the apartment were a number of stuffed benches, and in front of them eight or nine tables. The far end of the room was staked out with movable brass uprights, connected by rope. "That's a sparring ring," explained Anthony, the proud proprietor. "I hope we shall have many pleasant little scrapping matches. What do you think of the furniture? It isn't very grand, is it?"

"It just suits the place," I answered; "how did you manage to buy it?"

Anthony grinned. "I haven't bought it right out. I've got it on the hire system. It's a dear way of setting up shop, but, unfortunately, my account at the Bank of England is overdrawn."

"I say, Tony, old man," I said, catching him by the hand, "take this money, and pay for the sticks."

He returned my grasp. "No, Jack, dear old thing, I won't. You'll want every stiver of that, for remember quarter-monkeys are not picked up every day of the week, but I'll never forget you for making the offer."

"Do have some of it?" I urged.

Anthony shook his head. "If I am short of a pound or two, I'll come to you, Jack. Now, let's go upstairs and look at the billiard-room."

We ascended an iron spiral staircase and entered the billiard-room, which, by an ingenious arrangement on the loft principle, looked down into the apartment below. Then we went over some small rooms, to be used as bed-chambers, and offices in front, and wound up in the kitchen in the basement.

"Well, Jack," said Anthony, when we were once more in the street, "what do you think of it?"

"I think it's a very cosy crib," I answered heartily; "but what puzzles me is where you're going to get the members from?"

Anthony's face was illumined with one of his usual twinkles. "There, young feller," he cried, "you've hit the right nail on the head. Come into the Cri., and while we're having a chop I'll tell you."

When we were seated by the grill, he began:

"You see, Jack, there are very many sorts of clubs; some for University men, some for actors, some for officers, some for politicians, some for bishops and literary swells, some for dog-fanciers, some for swells, and some for snobs, but, as far as I can find out, there's no club for Bohemians. The Shakespeare was founded, perhaps, with this object, but it's full of dukes, and lords, and baronets. The Mutton Chop is the same, and the Choctaw only admits

actors and authors. Now, I don't object to dukes, lords, and baronets—indeed, I hope to get plenty of them on my club list—actors, authors, bishops, stock-brokers, and independent gentlemen—all will be welcome, but they must all be good chaps and hail-young-feller-well-met members. How am I going to get them? Well, through my committee. Here it is," and he unfolded a piece of paper. "Cast your optics over that, and you'll see that I've got representatives of all sorts and conditions of men. For instance, there are Sir Toby Trenchard and Lord Velox, they represent the racing element; there's Fishgate the amateur boxer, there's Gadzook the comedian, there's Pretyman the light comedian, there's Spout, the comic singer, there's Captain Datchet of the Guards, there's Shafts, the manager, there's Bung Harvey of the Blues, there's Sir Percy Spalding, there's Lord Clacton, there's Chortler the critic, there's Peddle the composer, there's the Wicked Uncle, there's Cocky, there's Reggie, and there's yourself. How's that for an 'omnium gatherum?'"

"Splendid!" I cried, "but leave me out, Tony, I shan't be of any use. Besides——"

"I know what you're going to say," he interrupted, "you don't care about being associated with Percy Spalding. Don't be an ass, young feller. What's the matter with Spalding? Has he ever done you an injury?"

"No," I answered, "but I don't like the man."

"Of course you don't," he said. "And why? Because he dances about after Tabby Bottlestrap. You shake your head, but I can see as far as most people through a brain-pan. Answer me this—Is Tabby your property?"

"No, of course she isn't," I replied angrily; "why do you ask such asinine questions?"

"Well then, young feller, I shall take it very ill on your part if you refuse to grant your old pal Tony this little favour."

"All right, Tony," I said, "you called me an ass just now, and no doubt I am one. Put me down among the others. I suppose I represent the music halls."

The opening of the Ibis was the occasion for the gathering together of the most mixed crowd possible, even in London. There were peers and prize-fighters, singers, and statesmen, jockeys, and artists, actors and stockbrokers—in short, what with the members proper, and the talent which had been imported to assist at the smoking concert, and give exhibitions in the little ring, Proprietor Anthony was quite justified in asserting that his "omnium gatherum" could not be matched at an International Exhibition. Everybody voted the Ibis a big success, the perspiring barmen did a roaring trade, the glove contests were keenly contested, and Mr Peddle the composer had provided a first-rate programme of vocal and instrumental music.

Suddenly, about twelve o'clock, the voice of Sir Toby Trenchard was heard exclaiming: "I say, Anthony Fuller, what time are we going to have supper?"

Supper! Anthony had been so busy arranging for everything else, that he had clean forgotten to order in any victuals. But Anthony Fuller was not easily defeated.

"Supper, Sir Toby, is not till one, and then I'm afraid it will be rather rough and ready, for my china

and glass merchant has disappointed me. Here Jack," he said, coming over to me, "for goodness sake help me to pull out of this. Have you got any money."

"Yes," I said, "about twenty pounds."

"Well," said Anthony, "will you and Cocky, and Reggie take a four-wheeler a-piece, and drive round and see what food you can pick up. You'll just have time to get some. I'll send myself to the Café Regent, and see what they've got, and also borrow as many forks, spoons, and knives as I can. We've got a lot of plates downstairs, but they're not unpacked. I daren't go out myself."

Of course Charlie and Reggie volunteered on the spot. We agreed to go different ways. I took Pall Mall and the Haymarket, Charlie went up to Tottenham Court Road and Soho, while Reggie hurried off to the Strand. By a quarter to one we were back at the Ibis with as incongruous an amount of edibles as it is possible to imagine. Hams, pickled onions, jellies, sardines, lobsters, crabs, bottled fruits, boiled beef, and I know not what, were piled up on the table in the office. Anthony had managed to borrow some hardware, and the tables in the big room were laid with tolerable neatness. All of a sudden Cocky whispered in a horror-stricken tone: "Great Scott! there's no bread." Nor was there, each of us having forgotten the Staff of Life. How were we to supply the deficiency?

"I have it!" cried Cocky. "As I was going through Soho just now, I saw a baker's shop just closing. I'll have all that fellow's loaves and rolls if I break down the door, and am taken up for robbery.

Say nothing to Anthony. Lord! what three muddle-heads we are!"

"I'll go with you, Cocky!" I cried, and sprang after him. Luckily one of our four-wheelers was hanging about outside on the chance of custom. We leapt in, and then Cocky could not remember the name of the street. However, by dint of driving here and there, we finally arrived at the shop. Of course it was closed, but a faint light glimmered through a chink in the shutters. Cocky brought his stick down with a mighty whack on the door, and repeated the blow two or three times. At last a woman began screaming, a window was thrown open, and a man's voice asked us in broken English what we wanted.

"Police!" retorted Cocky. "He's sure to come down for that," he added, *sotto voce* to us.

In a minute the shop door was opened, and the baker appeared in his shirt sleeves. "Vhat you vant?" he asked timidly.

"Bread—*Pain*," cried Cocky, pointing to the shelves. "*Vite!* whole families dying!" and he flung down a couple of sovereigns. In less than no time we had, with the assistance of the cabman, cleared out the entire stock, leaving the astonished baker to determine the explanation of this invasion. The honour of the Ibis was saved.

"You had a great variety of dishes at supper, Anthony Fuller," said Sir Toby in the wee sma' hours.

"Yes, Sir Toby," observed Anthony with a twinkle, "my *chef* is very fond of displaying his diversity of skill on an occasion like this. Glad you enjoyed it. I'll be sure and tell him. Good-morning."

CHAPTER *MAINLY ABOUT*
THIRTY-SECOND *MONEY-LENDING*

THE Ibis was not doing badly, but at the same time it was not progressing in that go-a-head fashion which Anthony would have wished. Expenses were met, but the profits were small, so infinitesimal indeed, that, as Tony observed ; "There may be bread and cheese here, but I like butter as well, and I'm hanged if I can afford it." The proprietor of the Ibis had, moreover, just about this period of his career, been cruelly treated. Shrewd as he was, he had been sold twice in three months, a circumstance which weighed as heavily on his mind from a sense of injured pride as from a sense of depleted pockets.

The first case was this. Lord Bass Rock came to Anthony one morning, and asked for an immediate loan of £500. He was off to Australia for the benefit of his health, wanted the necessary, and for the time being was "stoney." Would dear old Tony oblige him ; if so, there was the family plate as security ? Anthony, well knowing that Bass Rock was not only in financial difficulties, but also seriously in need of rest, advanced the "monkey," and refused to keep the security. He sent the chest of antique silver back to Bass Rock's house. What

happened? Miss de Bunyon (of the Longlighty play-house) was in charge of the Bass Rock household, and, like a pirate of the Spanish Main, not only seized upon the bullion, but transferred it to the keeping (in Bass Rock's name) of one of those gentlemen, who hang the triple spheres on high. Bass Rock died on the voyage, and Anthony lost his money.

Case the second. The wife of one of the members of the Ibis came crying to the Club one night. Her husband was on the march for Holloway. Would Mr Fuller rescue him? She would *never, never, never* forget his kindness if he would pay off the bailiffs and rescue her afflicted spouse. Here was her security—the diamond necklace belonging to her own dear mother. The debt was only £375. Anthony could never stand the tears of women, but bearing in mind the Bass Rock fiasco, he kept the necklace, paid off the bailiffs, and released the husband, who, the next day, started with his wife and family for the sunny land of Spain without beat of drum. Then Anthony had the necklace valued. The expert's opinion was that the stones being good paste, it might fetch £5 or £6 for stage purposes. These two incidents made Anthony sick, vexed, and angered with his fellow-creatures. It was just after the affair of this modern Diamond Necklace that Anthony and I were supping quietly and somewhat disconsolately in his private room at the Ibis. I was very much depressed by the news, which I had had of Tabby, and Tony was cut to the quick by being taken for, what he called a "mug," by Bass Rock & Co.

"There's no help for it, Jack, old chap," he said, "I shall have to put up the shutters sooner or later, and get a new pitch somewhere, unless——"

Here there came a knock at the door, and a waiter entered with a salver, and on it a visiting-card.

"Gentleman," he explained, "in Strangers' Room, sir, says he must see you at once."

Anthony took up the card, looked at it, and handed it to me. It bore the name of the Earl of Coalstowne, a young nobleman, who had but three or four years previously succeeded to one of the most magnificent patrimonies in the United Kingdom.

"What the deuce this means," said Anthony, "I don't know, but I'll find out. Excuse me, Jack," and he vanished.

As I smoked my cigar, I too marvelled. Lord Coalstowne was not a member of the Ibis. A long minority had placed him in possession of thousands of pounds when he came of age, and his estates were unencumbered. In short, he appeared to be a perfect Prince Fortunatus. Now what he wanted I think I had better relate as I heard it from Tony himself. He said :

"When I went down into the Strangers' Room I found Lord Coalstowne, whom I knew by sight, smoking a cigarette. He said, 'I daresay, Mr Fuller, you are surprised at my calling on you, but the fact is, I want £150,000 at once. Where can I get it.' I answered, 'Why not go to ——' 'Sol Jericho!' he interrupted, 'not a bit of use. I owe him £140,000 already. I was told you might suggest some one. The fact is, I've lost nearly all this money in Nice to people who, only three weeks ago, paid me considerable sums. I can't anticipate my income. My uncle has been communicated with on the subject, and has written most severely to me. Unless I get £100,000 by eleven o'clock to-morrow

morning, I shall be dishonoured, and consequently ruined—that is socially, for I have plenty of funds coming in later on. Now can you help me—Yes or No?’ The amount staggered me, but he was as cool as though he was playing penny nap. I could not call to mind a single financier capable of undertaking the risk, and finding the substance, at such short notice, but I asked: ‘If I get the money, what will you give me for my trouble?’ After a pause he replied, ‘Five thousand pounds.’ ‘Make it six to cover all expenses,’ I returned, ‘and I’ll do the best I can. Will you agree to my conditions?’ ‘Yes, I will,’ he answered, taking up his hat and preparing to go. ‘Do your utmost, for it’s life or death to me.’ ‘One minute, my lord,’ I said. ‘Let’s put this down on paper.’ And I wrote out the conditions on a sheet of foolscap, leaving the amount of interest blank. By it I was authorised to act as the Earl’s agent, and, in event of success, was guaranteed an honorarium of not less than £6000. Lord Coalstowne read the document through and signed it. ‘Remember,’ he cried as he got into his private hansom, ‘after eleven o’clock to-morrow all is off—Good-night!’ ‘Very good,’ I shouted, ‘but give me half-an-hour’s grace.’ The cab disappeared in the distance, and I was left standing on the doorstep, like a loon looking for a needle in a haystack. But my luck was in that night. As I was cogitating, down comes Jack Franklyn. ‘Well, Tony,’ he says in his polished way, ‘I don’t know what Coalstowne’s business may have been, but whatever it was, without prying into your affairs, can I help you?’ ‘Jack,’ I reply, ‘I’m not spoofing you or playing at pitch-farthing, but, Lord love you, lad! you, who were meant to be the Governor-

General of India or some such thing, and didn't get a shop, tell me where such a nobleman as Lord Coalstowne could get £100,000 if he wanted it.' 'Sol Jeri——' he began—'D——n Sol Jericho!' I broke in; 'name another.' He named several others. I put 'N.G.' to all their names. Finally he said, 'I say, Tony, what about Bob Milton? They say he's the richest bookie going—at least that's what Sir Rupert Gregory told me.' 'By Gad! young feller,' I cried enthusiastically, 'you're right. If it comes off, you'll stand in for that suggestion. Ted, you lazy scoundrel, the best hansom you can pick up directly!' I put on my hat and rushed out of the Ibis, leaving Jack Franklyn gazing after me on the door-mat with a look which seemed to say: 'Is Anthony Fuller drunk, or has he gone out of his mind?' I told the cabman to drive to the Alberta Club, where I knew that I should be almost certain to find Bob Milton. Sure enough, there he was, playing a game of billiards with Tom Tuffey, five hundred up, a thousand pounds a-side. There was a lot of betting on the match, and the Club was crowded. I sent in my name, but Milton replied by the waiter that he was too busy to see me. This sort of treatment would have put most men off, but I knew what Bob was. He'd rather have beaten Tuffey than skinned the lamb over the Cambridgeshire. So I sat down in the hall. I waited, and waited, and waited. At last I heard a burst of cheering, and I prayed the usual 'I hope to Heaven' that Milton will come in first. Presently the members, most of whom I knew, came streaming out, and I soon gathered that my supplication for Milton's good play had landed him the winner by fifteen. My presence in the hall made me the butt of

considerable chaff. 'What, Tony Fuller!' exclaimed one wag, 'are you waiting for the milkman?' 'Hallo!' cried another, 'Here's Fuller with a tip as strong as that on Bob Milton's cue!' I made no evasive reply to their ribald remarks, but merely stated that I was waiting for Bob Milton. 'He'll be here in a minute,' every one replied, when I asked how long they thought he would be. Still Bob Milton did not appear, and the dawn was beginning to appear. But I never left my post. My only thought was, that Lord Coalstowne must have this enormous sum of money by eleven o'clock. The clocks were striking five when Bob Milton appeared, evidently in the best of spirits. He was joking with his late opponent. Suddenly he perceived me on my perch. 'Hullo, young Fuller!' he exclaimed, 'I thought I sent you word hours ago that I couldn't see you?' 'So you did,' I answered, 'but I must see you. It's a matter of the greatest importance.' 'Good Lord!' he cried, 'this is no time of day for business. Come and see me at twelve to-morrow.' 'No,' I said firmly, 'I must have a chat with you, now or never.' He seemed impressed with my earnestness. 'Well,' he observed, 'I like a sticker. Get into my hansom, and on the way back you can tell me what this wondrous and important matter is.' As we drove along towards Regent's Park I unfolded my plan. At first he was incredulous, and kept repeating, 'Lord Coalstowne! Lord Coalstowne!—you're daft! One hundred and fifty thousand pounds! One hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Why not go straight to the Bank of England?' 'Look here, Mr Milton,' I said, 'I'm not daft, as you put it. I shouldn't have hung about the Alberta Club as I did,

if I didn't know I was doing a good stroke for both of us.' 'Well,' he said, as we drew up at his house, 'come in and show me your credentials over a pint.' I didn't feel at all sanguine, but I followed him into the dining-room, where he brought out champagne and a box of cigars. 'It seems all right,' he said, when he had heard all the details, 'but it's the amount that knocks the stuffing out of me.' I pitched every possible plea into him that I could think of. He listened attentively, and at last he said: 'Look here, Anthony Fuller, I'll do it if'—he paused, and I trembled—'my wife doesn't object. She's asleep now, and I daren't awake her. You say that you must have an answer by eleven o'clock? Very well, I promise you shall have a wire by half-past ten. I can't say more. Now I must go and have a wee bit of a snooze.' 'So must I,' I rejoined, 'but it must be on that sofa.' 'Great Christopher!' he muttered half to himself and half to me, 'but this is the most confounded, extraordinary sticker that I ever came across.' Mr Milton retired to roost, and I spread my heels on his sofa. A few hours later I was awake again, anxiously expecting the reappearance of my host. At ten o'clock he entered the room with a very grave expression of countenance. I knew what he was going to say. 'I'm sorry, Fuller,' he blurted out, 'but my wife objects.' I felt like a criminal condemned to death, but I had one trump left. 'All right,' I said cheerfully; 'but remember that when you refuse to do this for Lord Coalstowne, you not only offend him, but also all his friends. You'd better shut up shop when you refuse the soundest security ever offered to mortal man.' The tug of war had come. 'I said you were

a sticker,' he observed, 'and I'll consult Eliza again.' I only wished that I could have been present at the conference when he left the room. At ten minutes to eleven he came back, and said slowly; 'I'll advance the money at 20 per cent. If that's reasonable, fill in the document.' Overjoyed at my success I did so. 'You're on the square, I'm sure,' said Milton; 'have a pint and bring me the documents. I'll trust you.' Half an hour afterwards I was at Coalstowne House, Mayfair, with the cheque in my pocket, and also the necessary bills which were drawn at three, six, and twelve months. It was then ten minutes to twelve. I was shown into Lord Coalstowne's study, and he presently came in with a very gloomy smile. 'I suppose, Mr Fuller, you've failed?' 'On the contrary,' I replied, 'I've succeeded. Here's the cheque.' For the moment he seemed thunderstruck with joy. 'How can I thank you?' he cried, after a pause. 'How can I thank you?' 'By meeting these bills at maturity,' I replied. Lord Coalstowne signed the lot without even reading them. 'And now, my lord,' I said, 'I'll trouble you for a cheque for my six thousand pounds.' He turned colour and said: 'Couldn't you wait a week or two? The whole of this money has to be paid away at once.' I reflected for a moment, and then replied: 'Very well, I'll call here on this day three weeks. 'Right you are,' said Lord Coalstowne, 'and many thanks. If ever I can do you a good turn be assured I will.' I took the bills to Milton, who insisted on making me a present of a diamond ring. On the appointed day I presented myself at Coalstowne House, and found that the earl had gone into the country to attend the annual training of the yeomanry at

Coalmanstowne. I did not hesitate, but took the next train to that wealthy, but exceedingly unprepossessing town. Lord Coalstowne was sojourning at the hotel whereof the sign-board depicted the arms of his noble family, with the motto, 'Right makes might.' I sent in my card to Lord Coalstowne, but, after waiting two hours, was informed that his lordship had been abruptly summoned away, and had been excused by the colonel commanding from further participation in the training. I didn't half like the look of affairs, but I determined to run my fox to earth. I went to Coalstowne Castle, but he was not there. I returned to Coalstowne House, Mayfair, and again drew blank. I was beginning to despair of killing my quarry in this very long run, when I picked up a penny Society paper, and came across the following paragraph:

" 'We understand from one who knows him well ('by sight' omitted) that the Earl of C——lst——ne is sojourning at the British Hotel at that pleasant rising watering-place, Chipford-on-Sea. His lordship preserves a strict incognito, owing, we believe, to recent bereavement.' "

" Blessing the correspondent of the journal, I was off to Chipford-on-Sea as fast as the railway could take me, and at the British Hotel I had the felicity of at last getting face to face with the runaway, who was inscribed in the visitors' book as Mr Thomas Dawson—as the name of Mrs Thomas Dawson also appeared therein, perhaps the *nom de guerre*, or whatever you call it, was justified. It didn't take me long to get an interview. I walked straight into his lordship's private sitting-room. He was utterly flabbergasted. 'In the name of Providence, Mr Fuller!' he gasped, 'what do you want?' 'In the name of your signa-

ture,' I replied, showing him the foolscap commission note, 'I want your cheque for £6000.' Then he began to use bad language, and threatened to have me turned out of the hotel. I only laughed at his threats, and asked him under what name he would issue his commands? From bluster he descended to entreaty, but I never changed in my demeanour, and stuck to my demand like a jockey to the pig-skin. At last he sulkily produced his cheque-book and wrote me out a cheque for the full amount. I thanked him very cordially. He assured me that he bore me no ill-will, which was very kind on his part, considering the way in which I had worked to save him from financial collapse, and he asked me to dine with him. This change of front aroused my suspicions. I knew that he was quite capable of telegraphing to his bankers to stop the cheque, which I had taken the precaution to have made out uncrossed, pleading that I had no account myself. I was puzzling my brains how to get the draft through before a wire could be delivered in London, when I had a happy inspiration. Asking Lord Coalstowne to excuse me for a few minutes, I went downstairs and asked to see the landlord, a fussy little, sandy-whiskered man, with gold spectacles. He received me in his own sitting-room. I said, without beating about the bush—'I am a detective from Scotland Yard. It is of the utmost importance, in the interest of justice, that you should allow no telegrams or letters from the gentleman, who calls himself Dawson, to be sent from this hotel for twenty-four hours. May I rely on your help in this matter? I don't wish to bring your hotel into disrepute, and therefore I trust that you will see the advantage of assisting the cause of justice. Otherwise I must take

different measures.' The landlord trembled with fright, and said: 'I've suspected Mr Dawson ever since he arrived here, because he told me confidentially when he first came that he did not wish to be known, and then I read this in the *Busybody*.' He showed me the very paragraph which had put me on the visit. 'Ha! ha!' I said, 'he's a clever rascal and long wanted by me.' 'There goes his bell,' cried the landlord, rushing into the hall. 'Depend upon it, he's recognised me, and is sending off a telegram,' I said calmly. The landlord returned in a couple of minutes with a despatch in his hand. 'You were right,' he ejaculated excitedly, 'read this,' he added, handing me a despatch. It read :

" 'Messrs Brass & Brigginstock, 803 Lombard Street, London. Refuse payment of cheque drawn to order of Anthony Fuller for £6000.—COALSTOWNE.'

'There's the proof of the pudding,' I cried, 'give me this document. It's a clear case of forgery. But I can't make out why he sent it so openly.' 'He didn't,' replied the landlord, 'he put it in an envelope addressed to our postmaster with a florin inside, but, after your warning, I felt justified in opening it.' 'You're a very sharp man,' I said, 'but with your kind permission, the wire shall go all the same. It will be an undeniable proof of his guilt. I'll send it myself. If Dawson makes any enquiries about the message, say that it has gone. Rely upon me to get the whole business settled quietly.' So saying, I put the telegram in my pocket-book. 'I will always do my duty as an Englishman and a ratepayer,' said the landlord. Five minutes afterwards I was at the station. I found that there was a

train which arrived at Cannon Street at 3.15. Of course the bank closed at 4. The train was late, but, at a quarter to the hour, not without some shaking of the knees, I presented the cheque. The clerk merely turned it about in the usual way, asked me 'How I would have it?' and I swaggered out of the establishment with enough oof to set the Ibis on its legs again. As to Lord Coalstowne, he and I do not speak as we pass by, and I have never been tempted to re-visit the British Hotel at Chipford-on-Sea." Such was Anthony's story, given, as far as possible, in his own words.

Another money-lending reminiscence which he told me, is not without a strain of humour. A certain usurer called Spilling, was waited upon one day by a well-dressed man, who announced himself as Mr Gordon Barnes of Raptall Castle, Shropshire. He explained that he had lost a large sum of money in speculation, and that he required £3000 in three days to meet his liabilities. He explained that he had sought Mr Spilling's assistance because the time in which he had to settle was so short. He named his bankers, the London and Shoreditch, and said that under the circumstances he was prepared to pay an unusual amount of interest. Mr Spilling, who had the county families of Great Britain at his fingers' ends, was quite satisfied as to the social position of Mr Gordon Barnes; all he desired was to find out if the gentleman had any "kites" floating about. Mr Gordon Barnes assured him that he had not, and Mr Spilling soon discovered that this was the case, no Shylock east, west, north, or south having the owner of Raptall Castle on his books. Accordingly Mr Gordon Barnes, when he called again

received a very satisfactory answer from Mr Spilling, who had prepared a promissory note for £3,500 at three months. This, Mr Gordon Barnes duly signed, and Mr Spilling was filling in the cheque, when he cautiously observed to his client: "But after all, how do I know that you *are* Mr Gordon Barnes of Raptall Castle?"

"True," said the borrower, "but I've got two infallible proofs. One's the tail of my shirt"—here he produced that piece of linen—"on which you may see my name inscribed as plainly as marking-ink will make it. The other is the London and Shoreditch Bank. Come with me, and we will pay in the money together to my credit." Which was done most satisfactorily, and Spilling, highly delighted with his bargain, invited Mr Gordon Barnes to lunch with him at the Ship and Turtle. The Shropshire squire and the London financier parted on the best of terms. When, however, the note became due, it was not met by Mr Gordon Barnes at the London and Shoreditch Bank, and Mr Spilling, on enquiry, learnt with considerable uneasiness that Mr Gordon Barnes had closed his account the day after the money-lender's cheque had been cleared. However, Mr Spilling wrote to Mr Gordon Barnes at Raptall Castle, deploring the bad faith of his client, and asking for an immediate settlement with considerable costs. Instead, however, of forwarding the amount due, Mr Gordon Barnes preserved complete silence. Mr Spilling wrote and wrote again, and eventually got an exceedingly nasty letter from a firm of solicitors of the highest standing, intimating that their esteemed client had never borrowed a shilling in his life, and that if Mr Spilling made any more attempts at blackmailing,

✱

they would be compelled to institute criminal proceedings against him. Indeed, they had advised Mr Gordon Barnes to take this course, but that in consideration of Mr Spilling paying the bill of costs of the high-standing solicitor, and forwarding an ample letter of apology to Mr Gordon Barnes of Raptall Castle, no more, without prejudice, would be heard of the matter. Mr Spilling had to accede to this high-handed proposal, for, alas! alack! and well-a-day! the gentleman with the shirt-tail and the account at the London and Shoreditch Bank was but a vile impostor. He had opened his account, only two days before visiting Mr Spilling, with £50, on a forged letter of recommendation from one of the bank's customers. This rebuff caused poor Spilling's downfall, but he was too much of a "wrong 'un" himself not to admire the way in which he had been swindled. "By Gemini!" he would exclaim sometimes, when telling the story against himself, "I wish that sham Gordon Barnes had taken me into partnership, for after all I wasn't dealing with my own funds, and what a high old time we might have had together."

CHAPTER *MAJOR DODD-LAURISTON:*
THIRTY- *A SCENE IN THE*
THIRD *ALBANY*

AFTER all, the Ibis proved a great success, and Anthony Fuller looked to be in the way of making, if not a fortune, at least a very handsome income. At least, that is what everybody said, and many were the envious remarks of those pavement inspectors, who are as full of ideas as roast ducks are of sage and onions, but who rarely bring forward a practicable scheme.

As a matter of fact, I knew that Anthony had the greatest difficulty in making both ends meet. It is all very well to have a club with a goodly list of members, but without a large capital to start with, the proprietor is very heavily handicapped. His weekly bills, to say nothing about wages, have to be paid with regularity, and, I regret to say, when the Ibis was first started, this regularity did not extend to the subscriptions of the members. Some of them appeared to imagine that in a Bohemian Club subscriptions were wholly unnecessary. Then certain shining lights of the Committee would receive the entrance fees and subscriptions of elected candidates, and forget all about the matter till gently reminded of the circumstance some months afterwards

by the proprietor, who had excited the wrath of the new men by asking for moneys already paid.

Of course every little accident, from the slowness of a waiter to the lack of shaving-soap in the lavatory, was attributed to the personal negligence of the proprietor.

Mr Peddle, the composer who had volunteered to get up six smoking concerts without charge, "only oof out of pocket, dear old Anty-panty," he explained, rather staggered the proprietor by his long accounts for cabs, music and copying, pianoforte tuning and telegrams, without mentioning the gorgeous suppers which he commanded for his friends, the talented *artistes*, most of whom had been ordered by their medical advisers to drink nothing but champagne.

Then the sparring exhibitions were constant sources of outlay and dispute. And as the Ibis hardly ever closed its doors, but ran steadily round the twenty-four hours of the day, the strain put upon poor Anthony was more than an ordinary mortal could have put up with. However, as Tony observed, he was made of gutta-percha, and as hard as a hockey ball.

It was not long before Anthony, more from good nature than for pecuniary advantage, took a lodger, who occupied the only spare bedroom in the establishment. This lodger was none other than the redoubtable Major "Jim" Dodd-Lauriston, who for many years was, together with his brother "Dick," pointed out as one of the handsomest and most reckless men about town, and known not only in London, but in every city of Europe. Standing over six feet four utterly callous of the *convenances* of society, splendid shots and fencers, brave as lions and amorous as

turtle-doves, the two Dodd-Lauristons were the heroes of a hundred wonderful stories. Now it was "Dick" who had eloped with a fair and frail dame, and wounded the injured husband in a duel; then it was "Jim" who for a wager had carried off a sleeping German Prince, bedstead and all, at Homburg, and left His Highness to come to himself in the street; then, again, "Dick" had held his own with bare fists in a dozen rounds with Heenan, and immediately afterwards "Jim" had sat up all night at the Pomme-de-Terre Club, Paris, playing *Écarté* with the Duc de Toulouse, whom he mulcted of 500,000 francs before eight o'clock in the morning. On one occasion, when they were shooting together, both brothers claimed a particular bird. The dispute grew hot, and finally they settled the dispute by putting their hands up in the grassy side of the wood, surrounded by an admiring circle of keepers, loaders, and beaters. The fight between the fraternal giants was long and determined, and each was severely mauled, but whether "Jim" beat "Dick," or *vice-versâ*, I cannot pretend to say, as I was not present at this extraordinary duel.

"Dick" was claimant to the Marquisate and estates of Clanlauriston, which had been seized by the Crown when their forebear, the last Marquis, took up arms for the Young Pretender. There is every reason to believe that the claim was good, but, owing to the absence of one marriage certificate, the House of Lords twice disallowed the Dodd-Lauriston pretensions. "Dick" spent a fortune on prosecuting his rights, but it was of no avail. Probably, had he and "Jim" not been notorieties, the Royal prerogative might have been exercised in their favour.

At the time I am now speaking of, "Dick" had passed away unmarried, and "Jim," left with but slender means, was now the supposed Marquis of Clan-lauriston. The adventures through which he had passed had by no means quenched the Major's fire. On the contrary, he was just the same knight-errant that he had been, when he went out a lad to fight in the Indian Mutiny. He was a good friend, a bad enemy, and a *preux chevalier de dames*, if there ever was one.

On one of his cheeks there was a great scar, which was caused in this way. At a well-known night-house "Jim" had a dispute with a Jew, whom he threatened with a severe hiding. The Israelite was a small man, but, breaking a tumbler in half, he did not hesitate to attack his enemy with the jagged bottom of the glass, and caused the wound whereof the Major bore the trace till his dying day. Of course there was a fearful uproar, and, before they could be separated, "Jim" Dodd-Lauriston had nearly killed his cowardly assailant.

When the Major took up his quarters at the Ibis, he was in receipt of a small allowance paid monthly, and I think it was the frankness with which he spoke of his finances that induced Anthony Fuller to take him as a lodger.

"You see, Fuller," said "Jim" Dodd-Lauriston, with his inimitable loud-voiced drawl, "my income does not permit of my residing at one of these hotels, where I have spent thousands in my time. The rascally inn-keepers are so suspicious nowadays; only yesterday I went into Strong's, and called for a glass of sherry. The thief of a waiter held out the wine with one hand and extended the other

for the necessary shilling. There's no credit for gentlemen nowadays. I don't expect you to give me any if you'll let me have that bedroom. My beggarly allowance is paid punctually on the first of each month by cheque. Well, I'll endorse the document and hand it over to you. When you've taken your bill out of it, give me the change. Is it a bargain?"

Anthony said it was, and so the Major became his first and only lodger. I may state that "Jim" Dodd-Lauriston adhered rigidly to the contract, and though for the last fortnight of every month he was always in desperate need, he never mortgaged his coming pittance, though Anthony had often to come to the rescue. The Major's wardrobe was not extensive. I do not believe that he possessed more than two suits and four shirts. If he fell short in the matter of linen garments he would send his shirt round to a trustworthy French laundress in the neighbourhood, and lie in bed reading novels till it was returned to him, glossy and snowy, when he was always very particular in having it hung in front of the kitchen fire for half-an-hour. When the Major possessed a few pounds he was the soul of generosity, and would stand treat to every one he met, but when short he was content to let others pay the piper. He was not the least ashamed of this fact. Indeed he was very proud of it, and looked upon his existence as a huge joke. No one relished more than he did a ditty written by a nameless member, which on account of the "catchy" melody to which it was set by Tommy Peddle, became a great favourite with the Ibises, who would roar out the chorus, while the Major looked on with a beaming countenance,

occasionally murmuring, as a fresh topical verse was added : " A damned shame ! " " I'll wring your neck ! " he would add with a great gyffaw, shaking his fist at the writer of the indifferent lines. As the song has never been published I append a few verses, not as specimens of literary skill, but as showing what pleased the Ibises. The song was called : " That's What's the Matter with the Major," and ran as follows :—

I

" In a certain little village not a hundred miles from town,
 There lives a most remarkable old boy !
 His hair is soft and silver'd as the finest eider-down,
 And his collars are the population's joy.
 His moustache is waxed up tight,
 He knows not bed at night,
 In fact he is a regular old stager ;
 He is fond of pretty things,
 Who have got no wedding rings,
 And that's what's the matter with the Major !

Chorus.—That's what's the matter !
 That's what's the matter !
 That's what's the matter with the Major !

II

" Now this terrible Don Juan has a fascinating way
 Of making love to other men's *tartines*,
 But he always takes good care that for *them* the others pay,
 Or, as he blithely puts it, " find the beans " !
 To the Regent he will go
 And be boss of all the show,
 And of the brightest bird will be the cager !
 But when settling time is near
 He will nimbly disappear,
 And that's what's the matter with the Major !

(*Chorus as before.*)

III

“To a race-course he will sally on another fellow’s coach,
When seated by another fellow’s girl,
With Cupid’s bow and arrows he’ll the dainty quarry poach,
And set her gentle feelings in a whirl !
But he tells the little dove
That he bets not gloves but love,
And kisses are his only form of wager !
But somehow on the sly
He will catch a bookie’s eye,
And that’s what’s the matter with the Major !

(Chorus as before.)

IV.

“He is fond of eating dishes of the very, very best
When ask’d by pals to lunch, or sup or dine,
Indeed a host could never have a more expensive guest,
For he’ll only drink a high-class vintage wine !
But when times are dull and bad,
Yet the Major’s never sad,
And at meal-providing no one could be sager ;
All Bodegas he will ease
Of their biscuits and their cheese,
And that’s what’s the matter with the Major !

(Chorus as before.)

V

“He ought to be a Marquis with a castle, so they say,
But the House of Lords is jealous of his fame ;
There are always quarters for him in Old Castle Holloway ;
Where Her Majesty as hostess he can claim.
Now his washerwoman prays
That he’ll mend his washing ways,
For his messages about his shirts enrage her,
For he always wants one clean—
More than two she’s never seen,
And that’s what’s the matter with the Major !

(Chorus as before.)

VI

"He's invented a new waistcoat called the "Ibis-Spick-and-Span,"

Which is shirt and vest and tie in *one* combined ;
It will save a lot of trouble to his old ancestral clan,
For, though full of front, it fastens up behind !

And as Impressario

Round the world the Major'd go,

With Patti, if he only can engage her !

But his bankers, so I've heard,

Think this project is absurd,

And that's what's the matter with the Major ! "

(*Chorus as before.*)

The last verse refers to (*first*) the Major's delight at an evening-dress suit made all in one, which he saw a quick-change *artiste* use at a music-hall, when he declared that a shirt could easily be added; and (*secondly*) to a mysterious project, which he had in view, of engaging, provided he could get the necessary capital, all the best opera singers in the world, and taking them round that world in a specially hired Cunarder. He also had another idea of chartering a big steamer for gambling purposes. She was to lie in calm weather just outside the three miles' coast limit, and special tugs and launches were to bring off those desirous of indulging in, what French journalists call, *les distractions de Monte Carlo*.

The Major's maritime projects, by the way, nearly got Reggie Gregory, Cocky Larkhall, and myself involved in a very unpleasant affair, in which I was, as it turned out, particularly interested. For some time we had noticed that the Major was particularly well supplied with ready cash. The number of his shirts increased, he displayed several new suits, and shiny hats to match, while a private hansom called for him every

morning at the Ibis. Even Anthony was astonished the more so, when his lodger paid his monthly account with a ten-pound note, instead of "melting" his cheque.

"Depend upon it, young feller," said Anthony, the Sage, "my lodger's like the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. I only hope we shan't have to dress his wounds."

All this time the Major was as close as a prison door. I ventured to ask him one day if he had suddenly come into the Clanlauriston Estates. He gave one of his sounding laughs, and exclaimed: "Nearly as good, Jack Franklyn. It won't be long before I quit that dog-hole upstairs." We were having a cocktail together at the bar of the Ibis, and in this ungrateful way did he refer to his pleasant sleeping quarters. "Yes," he continued, twirling his long moustache, "as the song says, there seems to be a good time coming at last." And, Jack, my boy, I should like you and Reggie Gregory, and Charlie Larkhall, and, if he will, but he is such an unbelieving Pagan, Anthony Fuller, to be in this Bonanza."

"Well, what is it?" I asked, tipping off another "Ibis refresher," invented by Anthony.

"I can't give you all particulars at present," replied the Major slowly; "but if you'll come along with me in my hansom, I'll show you something that'll astonish you."

Having nothing to do, I agreed, and the Major told the very smart Jehu to take us to a yacht agency in the city.

On sending in his card by a clerk, the Major was immediately requested to go into an inner chamber. He told me to follow him, and we were presently saluting a middle-aged man with a certain nautical

cut about his clothes. He was Mr Lightfoot, late a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and now manager of the Wide World Yacht Agency.

The Major pulled a bundle of papers out of his pocket, and exclaimed: "The yacht seems to answer our requirements exactly, and I'm prepared to make the necessary deposit. Here it is," and, greatly to my astonishment, he put down seven £100 notes on the table. "I don't much care about her outlandish name, though," continued the Major, "*The Seven Sisters*."

"*The Seven Sisters*!" I exclaimed, "why, I know the boat. She used to belong to a Yankee named Derryboyd."

"Quite right," observed Mr Lightfoot. "He was what they call a 'crank,' and his friends have had to put him away. That's how she's come on my hands, but you'll bear me out, Mr Franklyn, when I say that she's a splendid vessel, and well worth the £7000 which I'm asking for her. She cost over £30,000 to build, and she's as sound as when she was launched on the Clyde six years ago. In fact, she's given away to save the cost of keep; for yachts, like horses, have to be fed.*

"I don't know anything about the price of steam-yachts," I replied, "but I can certainly say that I was never on board a finer craft."

"You're right, Jack," observed the Major approvingly. "I'm too old a soldier not to be something of an old sailor too, and, as I thoroughly overhauled *The Seven Sisters* in the West India Docks yesterday, I'll say ditto to you. Now, Mr Lightfoot, if you'll give me a receipt for these flimsies, I shall be obliged."

"Of course," returned Mr Lightfoot, making out the acknowledgment; "but, remember, that your principal

pays forfeit if the purchase is not completed by September the fifth. That," he added, glancing at an almanac hanging on the wall, "is to-morrow three weeks."

"We know all about that," cried the Major. "You don't suppose we're plarking down our money for nothing. We shall start from Gravesend on September the eighteenth."

The Major and Mr Lightfoot transacted their business, while I sat by in a maze of thought-wonder. Ten minutes afterwards we were bowling west again.

"Well, Jack," asked the Major, with one of his stentorian peals of laughter, "what do you think of that?"

"I'm blessed if I know what you're up to!" I answered. "What are you buying a steam yacht for, and——" I stopped suddenly.

"Ah!" said the Major, good-humouredly; "you were going to add, 'and where the deuce did you, "Jim" Dodd-Lauriston, find the oof?' Isn't that so?"

I was bound to confess that he could not have guessed more accurately what I was about to say. We stopped at the Albany, and the Major, having sent away the cab, was soon striding up that quaint colonnade, which stretches between Burlington Gardens and Piccadilly. He stopped at the door of some chambers about half-way up, and, ascending the staircase, knocked twice on a door on the first landing. I nearly fell backwards when the Major's loud summons for admittance was answered by none other a personage than Miss Evelyn Cavendish, better known to me as Tabby Bottletrap.

"Good gracious me!" she cried, "it's Jack Franklyn! What on earth are you doing here?"

Recovering myself, I replied with a forced smile: "I might echo your question."

"And you shall have your answer," she cried. "I've been asked to lunch with my American friend, Mr Vincent P. Biggleswade of New York, to meet his friend, Major Dodd-Lauriston, but I never expected to meet you, Jack. His valet's gone out to get some ice, and, as he's busy writing, I ran to the door, knowing the Major's rat-a-tat-tat. Come in, and hang up your hats behind the door, for the place belongs to me," she continued, singing a popular comic song of the day.

I did not pause to reflect how Tabby came to know the Major's "rat-a-tat-tat." I was really glad to meet her in such a good humour, for, truth to tell, I had sadly neglected her since the production of *The Pet of Britannia*, and expected that she would resent my desertion of her. However, she seemed in the best of spirits, and she could be as merry as the proverbial grig. Mr Vincent P. Biggleswade was a very yellow little Yankee of about thirty, with a clean-shaven face, and wearing gold-rimmed double glasses on his sparrow-hawk nose.

"Wa'al," said he to the Major, "is everything settled?"

"Everything," replied "Jim" Dodd-Lauriston. "Here's the receipt. Now, young people, go away and play in the next room till luncheon's ready, for Mr Biggleswade and I have some accounts to go through."

We passed through some folding-doors, and found ourselves in a pretty drawing-room, hung round with

English engravings and water-colours, while the mantelpiece was covered with framed photographs of officers in the Guards. Evidently, Mr Biggleswade had taken the chambers furnished, as indeed was the case, the rooms being owned by Captain Chickwell of the Grenadiers, who had gone to Norway for salmon fishing.

"And now, Jack," exclaimed Tabby, sinking into a plush arm-chair, "I want to know why you have been so unkind to me?"

"I don't know what you mean?" I retorted, rather sulkily.

"Oh yes, you do," she answered, shaking her pretty forefinger at me, "I haven't seen you since you went away in a bad temper, after I'd slaved myself to death to make your sketch a success. You never came to see it, although I've looked night after night for you. I suppose it's that horrid Anthony Fuller, who, I understand, has started a low thieves' kitchen, who has set you against me."

"No, he hasn't," I said hotly, "Tony Fuller is the best fellow in the world! I only wish that I had always followed his advice. As to your calling the Ibis, his club, a thieves' kitchen, you're not very complimentary to your dear friend, Sir Percy Spalding, who is on the Committee as well as myself."

She flushed up. "Of course, when I said thieves' kitchen, I didn't mean anything but chaff. But why do you call Percy Spalding *my* dear friend, with the accent on the 'dear'?"

"For the very good reason that every one knows he is," I retorted, "but——"

"Look here, Jack Franklyn," said Tabby, who was evidently trying to control her temper, "I choose my

friends, and you choose yours. Let that be settled once and for all. What right have you to dictate to me? Am I your property?" I remembered Anthony having put the very same question.

"No," I answered roughly. "And God forbid that you should be!"

"Amen!" put in Tabby with a mocking laugh. "When I'm put up to auction I shouldn't like to be knocked down to you."

"You're not likely to be," I responded, "your price is far above my means."

She jumped up from the chair, her eyes blazing with anger. For the moment, I thought that she was about to strike me.

"Hit me!" I said calmly, "it isn't the first time that you've threatened me. What is the dreadful secret which you hold over my head? What is it that you know to my detriment, which you won't tell me?"

She did not answer, but a white look came over her cheeks as she sank into the chair again, and hid her face in her hands.

"Why don't you speak?" I continued, waxing angry. "Have I done anything disgraceful? Was it you, or was it I, that made us more to one another than we ought to have been. But for your poisonous temptation I might have been an honourable man, not ashamed to meet with those women who *are* women—pure, good, and holy. It is you, and such as you, who drag down men to their own level. My blood boils in my veins when I read in the papers of the heartless seducer and the villainous betrayer. It is the woman who seduces and betrays in nine cases out of ten, not the man. You, and such as you!"

I paused, quite exhausted by my own vehemence.

Tabby got up, pale and trembling. "You are right, John Franklyn. It is women such as I," she said quietly and bitterly. "Women who, brought up in an atmosphere of vice, are supposed to be as innocent as new-born babes. You are quite right in your accusation, but you forget that women such as I have passions which must be appeased, and have longings which must be satisfied. We call it love, you call it lust—that is all the difference."

"But this secret?" I cried. "What is it?"

"I will tell you, I promise you, as soon as I dare," she answered humbly; "but you must trust me a little while longer. And, Jack," she continued tearfully, "if you ever had the slightest regard for me, don't be mixed up in this yacht business. The Major knows nothing of it, but, accidentally, I have discovered something that means no good."

"I've no doubt of that," I cried scornfully, "or you wouldn't know of it."

"You are very cruel," she said resignedly; "but I deserve it."

As she spoke the folding doors opened, and Mr Biggleswade and the Major entered.

"Lunch!" exclaimed the Major, "lunch! I'm as peckish as a carrion crow. I hope Jack has been telling you some pretty fairy tales, Miss Cavendish."

"Oh!" Tabby answered, "he's been so amusing, I had no idea that he was such a woman-killer. You'll find him most entertaining."

But all through the meal I was as dull as ditch-water, and, as at the supper party, made an early escape, Tabby departing at the same time. We walked silently down the Albany, and in Piccadilly

I put her into a hansom. She held out her hand over the door.

"Good-bye, Jack," she said. "We part good friends," and she held out her hand.*

I touched it, and replied: "We shall never be good friends till you have told me what you know."

She shook her head, and, through the trap, told the cabman where to go. Again I felt a pang of jealousy.

CHAPTER *AT MOUNT ST GREGORY.*
THIRTY- *CAPTAIN DRAKE-*
FOURTH *LEIGH.*

IT was arranged that Charlie Larkhall, Reggie Gregory, and myself should accept Mr Vincent P. Biggleswade's invitation for a cruise to the West Indies, but, curiously enough, the Major, who at first had seemed anxious to secure the company of Anthony, now stated that his friend, Mr Biggleswade, objected to the proprietor of the Ibis, and begged us not to say a word about the voyage to our friend. Of course we promised, the more so as the Major said that Anthony's feelings would be hurt if he knew that he (the Major) had proposed his name and it had been rejected.

"Just as bad as being blackballed at a club," observed the rightful Marquis of Clanlauriston; "can't understand Biggleswade's objection, but there it is."

One of the most original members of the Ibis was a little, wiry man called Captain Drake-Leigh, one of the best amateur horsemen in England, and also one of the most daring *coueurs de dames*. He literally stopped at nothing in both branches of the sport to which he was addicted. He had been known to win a steeple-chase after losing both his

stirrup-irons, and on his own legs had beaten the Amateur Champion over hurdles. He had been the hero of several amatory escapades which did not redound to his moral credit, and, as he put it, had often faced the starter at the Divorce Court, but he was, nevertheless, so cheery a personage, and so splendid a rider, that he was a coveted guest at country houses, where hosts and hostesses did not object to skylarking. And at the time of which I am speaking, practical joking and horse-play were far more common than they are now. In such diversions Drake-Leigh was a leader of fast gentlemen and ladies. He exercised the greatest ingenuity in the devising of his jests, and never drew back on the score of wounded feelings or probable physical pain.

Shortly after my encounter with Tabby at Mr Biggleswade's chambers, Reggie Gregory asked Cocky Larkhall, Tony Fuller, and myself to run down from Friday to Monday to his father's place in Hampshire, and when we arrived at Mount St Gregory we were not surprised to find Drake-Leigh of the party, Sir Rupert being one of the most consistent sportsmen on the turf—so much so, indeed, that he had considerably encumbered the family estates by his unabated confidence in the blood of Thormanby sires and Waxy mares.

I need not go into the component parts of the company assembled. It consisted of the usual assortment of matrons, wallflowers, and *ingénues*, balanced by Members of Parliament, old fogies, young fogies, Guardsmen, and Foreign Office clerks. The reason of their being bidden to Mount St Gregory was what was known as the September

Ball, held every year under distinguished patronage at the neighbouring town of Gorchester.

Reggie had been asked by his mother to bring down some dancing men, hence our invitation. When Anthony heard that he was looked upon as a dancing man, he observed that the only tripping of which he had ever been capable was at football. However, he went all the same, and at the ball was at once the terror and delight of his partners in square dances, wherein he astonished all by the wondrous and fantastic capers which he introduced into Lancers and Quadrilles. These, he declared to the country damsels with whom he "stood up" to be the latest figures introduced by order of the Lord Chamberlain at Buckingham Palace and Marlborough House.

Such a grand opportunity for displaying a sample of his vagaries was not to be neglected by Captain Drake-Leigh. He had been paying particular attention to a pretty, fair woman, one Mrs Loughborough, who, however, did not in the least respond to the gallant horseman's advances. The Captain resolved to be revenged on the lady, but he had no opportunity at the ball. The Mount St Gregory party had arrived in three different vehicles, the rumbling family coach, Lady Gregory's double brougham, and the omnibus in which the younger guests travelled.

Now, after Mrs Loughborough had shaken off Captain Drake-Leigh, she had, with the curious perversity of women, attached herself to Anthony Fuller, who happened to sit next to her at supper. Good old Tony, never loth to carry on a flirtation, responded to the fair Circe's advances,

the more so as he perceived that the Captain was chewing the wax off his moustache with vexation. He therefore deserted the local nymphs, and laid himself out to please his new conquest, which he most certainly did, judging by the continuous laughter with which she greeted his sallies. As Mr Loughborough, M.P., was playing sixpenny whist in the ante-room, this unblushing flirtation gave him no trouble whatever. Besides, he was pachydermatous on the subject of his wife's indiscretions, the main object of his life being the introduction of bimetalism into the commercial ethics of Great Britain.

"By Jove! Jack," said Cocky to me, "Tony's going it, isn't he? And, Great Christopher! if he isn't going to waltz!"

It was only too true. The valiant proprietor of the Ibis, fired by the bright eyes of his chosen dame, was about to embark on a circular tour of the town hall. Cocky and I were both engaged, but we were so interested in Tony's volutions that, like *fainéant* knights, we neglected our expectant partners. Anthony went round like a huge top attached to a diminutive teetotum, for Mrs Loughborough was of short stature. I will do him this justice that he never flinched from his task, but just as he got in front of the dais devoted to duennas and decorum, a terrible collision occurred with none other a personage than Captain Drake-Leigh, who was executing faultless steps with the younger Miss Gregory. The result was never in doubt. The Captain and his partner went down like a cutter yacht rammed by an ironclad, and he and Miss Gregory sprawled on the floor, to the infinite horror of the dowagers.

"Clumsy brute!" muttered the Captain, as he helped his partner to rise.

"Beg ten thousand pardons!" gasped Anthony, who was winded by the unwonted exercise.

Miss Gregory looked very angry, but said nothing. Mrs Loughborough was convulsed with malicious laughter as her cavalier led her from the field of battle to the refreshment-room. The Captain glared, but, to do him justice, made no further allusion to the accident, if accident it was, for I had my own suspicion that Mrs Loughborough had purposely steered her galleon out of the proper course.

The ball came to an end while the moon was gradually making room for the dawn. On the way back to the Mount it was suggested that those of the omnibus party, who wanted to smoke, should go outside. Greatly to our surprise, Mrs Loughborough said she would like a cigarette, and was presently alongside the coachman, with the devoted Anthony next to her. The box seat only held three, but behind it was another, whereon Cocky, Reggie, myself, "Tuffy" Topcard, and Drake-Leigh, took our places. The Captain was immediately behind Mrs Loughborough, to whom, however, he did not speak. She was too engrossed in the fascinating discourse of Master Anthony.

It was broad daylight when we arrived at the hall. The inside passengers got out first, and then, the steps having been set up, Anthony prepared to assist his fair companion to descend, but, greatly to our astonishment, directly he rose, he toppled over, dragging Mrs Loughborough with him. Luckily, Reggie and I caught hold of the lady, and held her back. There was a horrid sound of tearing,

and Anthony subsided into the hands of two footmen, carrying away the greater portion of the right side of Mrs Loughborough's sealskin jacket on the right sleeve of his overcoat.

"Tit for tat!" muttered the Captain.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" cried Mr Loughborough, emerging from the family coach.

"Nothing, dear, nothing," replied his wife sweetly; "only my cloak caught on the rail, and Mr Fuller kindly saved me from a dreadful fall."

Anthony a few minutes later showed me the sleeve of his coat. To it was attached a great piece of torn sealskin and lining, fastened by three large safety-pins.

"That's Master Drake-Leigh's doing, I suppose," observed Anthony, "but I'll be even with him."

"But how could he have done it?" I asked.

"I suppose my arm lost its way round her waist," he replied. "I must have thought that I was waltzing," he added, with one of his queer twinkles. "And now to bed."

Later on in the day the guests straggled down to foregather like pheasants after a big battue. Some had gone out among the stables and turnips; Sir Rupert and Captain Drake-Leigh were at the Stud Farm inspecting the yearlings; Cocky was ferreting rabbits with Reggie, an easy but not unexciting method of whiling away a few hours, when Anthony and I met at the luncheon-table, from which every lady, with the exception of Lady Gregory and her daughters, was absent. I cannot say that either our hostess or the second Miss Gregory greeted the proprietor of the Ibis with much cordiality. The terrible downfall at the September Ball was a

reminiscence which was evidently uppermost in their minds. But Tony was never yet abashed by the disfavour of man or woman. Before he had despatched his first helping of partridge-pie he had secured the favour of his fair hearers, and was making them (as they expressed it) "die with laughter" at his experiences with the ladies of the neighbourhood.

"But what about Mrs Loughborough?" asked the second Miss Gregory rather spitefully. "You seemed to pay her considerable attention, Mr Fuller."

"Of course I did," replied Anthony, "seeing that her natural protector, her husband, preferred whist to whisking. Do you know, Lady Gregory, that I am a thorough impostor. I accepted your invitation as a dancing man. I know as much about dancing as does an elephant or hippopotamus, as Miss Gertrude can witness, she who rivals the fairies."

"Certainly I can," replied the second Miss Gregory, but in mollified tones. "You knocked Captain Drake-Leigh and myself over in a most undignified fashion."

"*Most* undignified!" echoed Lady Gregory, who, however, doubtless remembered that her daughter's *lingerie*, when displayed at her downfall, did no discredit to the family. "I am afraid, Mr Fuller, that you are a headstrong man."

"An armstrong man you mean, my lady," said Anthony, complacently helping himself to more pie. "The fact of the matter is, I think like a parrot. I am physically strong and mentally weak."

At this moment the butler entered with a square deal box. "I shouldn't have brought it in, Miss," he said, "but the label says 'Fragile, to be delivered immediately.'"

Miss Gertrude rose from the table with an exclamation of delight.

"Open it, Pawkins, at once," she cried.

The butler obeyed her commands, and disclosed a lovely bouquet of *La France* roses, gardenias, stephanotis and maiden-hair fern. To the nosegay was attached a card bearing the inscription: "Miss Gertrude Gregory, from a collider in tribulation.—A. F."

The ladies uttered a simultaneous cry of admiration, and Miss Gertrude supplemented it with the remark: "O Mr Fuller, really you are too good!"

Then the elder Miss Gregory supplemented it after examining the label: "But this comes from Covent Garden! How on earth did you manage it?"

"Easily enough," replied Anthony. "Directly after I was stupid enough to upset Captain Drake-Leigh and Miss Gertrude, I sent up a note by the guard of the mail train from Gorchester, telling Dicksons to despatch the best bunch of flowers they could, by the morning express to Bormouth. I am glad it's got here in time."

There was a chorus of adulation, led by Lady Gregory at Mr Fuller's thoughtfulness, which was scarcely concluded when Mrs Loughborough appeared, radiant in olive green and pale blue, with a bunch of superb *Gloire de Dijon* roses fixed in her ample corsage. "Thanks a thousand times," she murmured, on greeting Anthony, but in so low a tone that I alone caught her words. But the younger Miss Gregory seemed no longer in such good spirits.

We passed the afternoon in visiting the ruins of old St Gregory's Priory, when I gathered that the ancestor of my friend Reggie, having been appointed

monk-hunter by Henry VIII., had not only been given the lands on which the residence of the family now stood, but also the name of the dispossessed celibates. The real appellation of this worthy, according to the "Baronetage," was "lost in oblivion," like the title of the Earls of Mar. There are many similar instances in the records of the British Bible. We spent a thoroughly enjoyable time at the Priory, the more so as Cocky and I, doubtless inspired by the surroundings, trolled forth various ditties, which, while extolling the mundane qualities of the monks of old, left their religious qualifications in grave doubt.

I observed that Anthony and Mrs Loughborough were still as good friends as they had been at the ball. They seemed to have entered upon an alliance, offensive and defensive, and knowing Anthony's temperament, I waited for results. The elder Miss Gregory seemed disposed to become better friends with Charlie Larkhall, and I was considerably amused at her attack, knowing that his devotion to Princess Pauline was immovably fixed. But these forlorn hopes have the advantage of showing to women that fidelity is not exclusively a feminine attribute.

The first news, which we received when we got back to the hall, rather chilled by our expedition, was, that Mr Loughborough had suddenly been summoned to London to consult a German professor on the burning question of Bimetallism. He had left a dutifully-worded note for his wife, expressing his sincere regret that he had been unable to embrace her before his departure. We knew every line of the missive, because Mrs Loughborough read it aloud

before throwing it into the beech-log fire, which cheerfully burnt in the hall. Captain Drake-Leigh was one of the audience, and I perceived a gleam of satisfaction in his grey-blue eyes. “

“At all events,” he observed with a twist of his moustache, “we have been left residuary legatees of the better half of the Loughborough estates.”

Everybody laughed except Mrs Loughborough, who observed without a smile: “The Loughborough Estates consist of a house in Eaton Square, and a cottage at Cowes, strictly entailed on the heirs male.”

“What bad taste!” cried the Captain, with his most impertinent smile, “they should be the heritage of the airs and graces female.”

We spent the afternoon playing lawn-tennis, lawn-billiards, lawn-polo, and bowls, for there was a mighty stretch of sward, big enough for a cricket ground, in front of the house, and again Anthony Fuller and Mrs Loughborough were partners in most of the pursuits in which we engaged. Tea was served under a grand sumach—rather a rare tree in England—and there, it was that Captain Drake-Leigh (during the absence of Tony, who was no advocate of Bohemianism, and had gone to the house in quest of more congenial refreshment) approached Mrs Loughborough, and engaged her in conversation. I do not know what passed between them, but, on the re-appearance of Anthony, the Captain rose and whispered something to her.

Mrs Loughborough screamed, and exclaimed: “Go away, you horrid man, do!”

Drake-Leigh coolly observed: “I’ll bet you twenty pairs of gloves to one I succeed. Now then, I’ll hop,

run, and walk two hundred yards against any man for a sovereign a time, and a fiver apiece on the rub, that is, one man to win two events."

I at once took him up, and so did Reggie, Cocky, and "Tuffy" Topcard. Sir Rupert marked out the course, and other male guests officiated as starters, judges, and referees. Anthony, alone, did not join in the races, but retired into the shrubberies with Mrs Loughborough.

At hopping, the Captain was *facile princeps*. Let any one try to hop two hundred yards, and he will find it by no means an easy task, unless he be like Donato, the dancer, accustomed to the use of one leg only. The wily horseman had placed this event first, because he knew that it would tire the other competitors before the running and walking began. Reggie and I "tumbled" to this manœuvre, and finding, after going fifty yards, that we had no chance, gave up. Not so Cocky, who bounded along like a kangaroo, and just beat "Tuffy" Topcard for second honours. The running came next, and, before we started, I made an arrangement with Reggie that whichever of us should win, should be "first horse" in the walking match. Not that either of us expected to beat the Captain. Cocky and "Tuffy" were too exhausted to race, so there were only three starters. I knew that Reggie, on old Eton form, was slightly better than I was at a hundred yards, but, on the other hand, I had twice defeated him for the School quarter-mile, and once, at the same distance, for the Strangers' Race at Christchurch Sports, Oxford. So, as far as we were concerned, the betting might have been level. As it turned out, I just managed to win by half-a-yard, the Captain being about the same distance in front of

Reggie. Drake-Leigh took my victory very good-humouredly.

"Didn't know you were such a flyer, Franklyn," he said, laughing. "You ought to go into training for a Sheffield Handicap."

After ten minutes' rest, we toed the mark for the walking contest. Walking a mile, or two miles, or even three, is not uncommon, but walking two hundred yards is an event which I never remember to have seen on the programme of any athletic meeting. I learnt afterwards that the Captain, when he made these sporting offers, always relied on two certainties—the hopping and the walking. He did not know that Reggie and I had made a *spécialité* of marching short distances in quick time at Eton, and, much later on, at the Bloated Grange, when we would catch the train, without running, to a dead certainty. For the first hundred yards we were level, and then Reggie got a slight lead, the Captain and I being neck and neck. Some forty yards from home I drew up to Reggie, who immediately slackened speed; I passed him, and won rather easily by two yards and a half, the Captain and Reggie making a dead heat for second place. The Captain pulled out his six pounds with an ill grace.

"Confound you, Reggie Gregory!" he said, "if you hadn't weakened at the finish we should have been quits over the rub, one all."

"Quite so," replied Reggie, "only, you stick to hopping in future, and remember that Bingo Franklyn carried first colours for our stable to-day."

The worthy Captain saw that he had been sold at his own game, but he said nothing, contenting himself, as usual, when annoyed, with lubricating his anger with *pommade hongroise*.

Just as I was tying my white choker, before the dinner-gong sounded, Anthony came into my room and said abruptly :

"I say, young feller, what do you think that brute, Drake-Leigh, has told Kitty—I mean Mrs Loughborough?"

"That he adores her, I suppose," I replied, with a smile.

"No, that he'll see her undress to-night, the beast!" growled Anthony, fiercely.

"Nonsense," I said, "it's only some of his ill-conditioned chaff. The idea's perfectly absurd."

"I don't know about that," observed Anthony. "He's a devil of a card, and sticks at nothing. However, Mrs Loughborough consulted me on the subject, and I advised her to tell Lady Gregory."

"The very best thing she could do," I exclaimed. "I suppose there are no secret doors in the walls, or traps in the floor or ceiling of her room?"

"No," said Anthony, "it's one in the new wing, only built two or three years ago, after the fire. I've found out all about it from Reggie."

"Then, Tony," I said, "you may depend upon it the whole thing is a silly attempt to frighten Mrs Loughborough. Hullo! there's the gong!"

"Well, anyhow," retorted Anthony, as we went downstairs, "I shall keep a good look-out."

"Do, Tony," I said. "How grateful Mr Loughborough ought to be to you."

He only grunted, and we entered the drawing-room. Anthony did not take Mrs Loughborough into dinner, but somehow or other he managed to get on her left side, and by the earnest way in which they were conversing, I have no doubt but that he

was comforting her with regard to Captain Drake-Leigh's indecent threat. We spent the evening playing charades and Dumb Crambo, and shortly after eleven the ladies, pleading fatigue after the ball, retired to bed, and most of the men adjourned to the billiard-room, but the Captain excused himself from pool, saying that he had some very important letters to write. We were soon busy at the game.

I must now relate what happened while we were knocking the balls about. Acting on Anthony Fuller's advice, Mrs Loughborough told her hostess of Drake-Leigh's threat. Lady Gregory treated it as I did, and laughed at the idea.

"He's only trying to frighten you, my dear," she said, "but we'll 'mak' siccar,' as the Scotch say."

So they searched Mrs Loughborough's bedroom thoroughly through. They looked under the bed, into the wardrobe, under the sofa, and into the dressing-room, the door of which was bolted and locked on the inside. Lady Gregory pointed out this defence to Mrs Loughborough, and advised her to turn the key of the bedroom door. I ought to mention that Mrs Loughborough's maid had gone to bed suffering with toothache, and that her mistress would not hear of accepting the services of Lady Gregory's Abigail. There are some little secrets which ladies like to keep to themselves and their tirewomen—if they can. Scarcely had Mrs Loughborough begun her disrobing, when she was terrified to hear a voice exclaim, in the well-known tones of Captain Drake-Leigh: "I see you! I see you!"

With a scream she rushed to the door, and fled to Lady Gregory's room. Lady Gregory, firmly convinced that her guest was labouring under some

hallucination, tried to calm her, and suggested that her ears had played her false.

"No! No!" cried Mrs Loughborough. "I am sure that I heard that wretch's voice."

"Well," said good-natured Lady Gregory, "let us have another inspection."

This time the search party was strengthened by the two Gregory girls and a couple of maids. The most minute hunt revealed nothing in the shape of a man, and at last Mrs Loughborough began to believe that her fears had preyed upon her imagination.

After the departure of the searchers she began to undress again, when, to her horror, the words: "I see you! I see you!" in Captain Drake-Leigh's voice, were distinctly audible.

With a wild shriek, repeated again and again, she fled down the corridor, finishing up with cries of, "Help! Help!"

At this moment Anthony Fuller was about to take his third pool, when the screams fell upon our ears even in so far distant an apartment as the billiard-room.

"By God!" cried Tony, flinging down his cue, "that blackguard's doing what he said he would!"

He bolted from the room, through the swing doors, across the hall, and up the staircase, and we followed after to the new wing. There we found Mrs Loughborough in an hysterical state, surrounded by sympathetic ladies, in more or less becoming dressing-gowns and wrappers. They were all afraid to enter Mrs Loughborough's bedroom. Lady Gregory, evidently distressed and agitated, explained the case to us.

"I'll find the little villain, even if he's up the

chimney!" cried the valiant Anthony. "Come on, boys!"

We rushed into the sweet-smelling chamber, and overhauled everything. There was evidently no one in the chimney, for we piled up the fire till it would have stifled a salamander. Every one was fairly puzzled. Anthony alone kept up a restless research. At first he thought the voice might have come from outside the window, but no, neither rope nor ladder was visible, and even Captain Drake-Leigh would not have risked his neck by climbing up the newly-planted jessamine and climbing roses. Anthony, looking like a baffled bloodhound, ran his hands through his hair, exclaiming:

"Well, I'm done in one act!"

Then, suddenly, with a wild cry, he rushed to the bed, from which the sheets and blankets had been stripped, but whereon reposed the pillows and bolster. He gripped hold of the latter. It moved, it kicked, it said—"I give in, let me out!"

Tony cried—"Give me a hand, Jack. I've got the fox. Cocky, run and fill the bath in the bathroom with cold water. This gentleman wants cooling."

The imprisoned Captain (who had, as we learnt afterwards, with the connivance of a bribed housemaid, slipped himself, being of small stature, into the bolster case) struggled, prayed, and swore. It was of no use. Half-a-dozen strong arms bore him to the bathroom, followed by a crowd of men and women. The bath had double taps attached, so it did not take long to fill, and then Anthony Fuller cried:

"Up with him!" The struggling captive was lifted on high. "Down with him!" and he splashed heavily into the bath. "Tit-test for tat-test," observed

Tony complacently, and he directed two of the footmen, who appeared on the scene, to prevent the Captain from drowning.

We held high revelry that night and morning, and when some of us afterwards struggled down to go to church, we learned that Captain Drake-Leigh had departed for London. He was never seen again at the Ibis.

CHAPTER *I QUARREL WITH*
 THIRTY- *ANTHONY. THE TRAGEDY*
 FIFTH *OF ROSHERVILLE CLIFFS.*

WHEN we returned to town after our adventures at Mount St' Gregory, I learnt from the one and only Major that *The Seven Sisters* would assuredly start from Gravesend on the eighteenth, or, at latest, the nineteenth, of the month, so Charlie Larkhall, Reggie, and I set to work, getting ready for our trip with Mr Vincent P. Biggleswade, citizen of the United States. I confess that I had some qualms of conscience about not revealing the projected voyage to Anthony Fuller, but the Major was dead against it.

"No, my dear Jack," he said, "Tony's a doosid good chap and all that sort of thing, but he's got quite enough to do to keep the Ibis afloat without going afloat himself, and as Biggleswade don't wish the matter mentioned, let us be mum."

I did not half like sneaking off from my old friend without telling him of the expedition, but what was I to do? We had only a week or so wherein to complete our preparations, and we were busy from morning till night. I thought that Anthony smelt a rat—indeed, shortly afterwards I know he did, but he never breathed a word to me on the subject. It

was his Lodger who "gave the show away," when and where I cannot determine, but two days before our fixed departure, the following paragraph appeared in that famous society journal, *The Orb* :—

"It is always pleasant to record the fact that there are plenty of Englishmen ready to follow in the wake of Columbus, not for profit but pleasure. I understand that on the 22nd inst. Major Dodd-Lauriston, the well-known *bon viveur* and claimant of the dignity of Marquis of Clanlauriston, sets sail from Gravesend on his newly-acquired steam-yacht *The Seven Sisters*, one of the most magnificent private vessels afloat. Her destination is the West Indies. Major Dodd-Lauriston will be accompanied by a select party of friends, including Lord Charles Larkhall, Mr Reginald Gregory, eldest son of Sir Rupert Gregory, and Mr John MacWashington Franklyn, eldest grandson of the celebrated diplomatist, the late Viscount MacWashington. To such a distinguished party I can only wish heartily *bon voyage* and *au revoir*."

It will be noted that the name of our host, Mr Biggleswade, was not even mentioned. I was reading the above paragraph in *The Orb* at the Ibis while consuming a modest breakfast-lunch, when Anthony Fuller sat down beside me, and, pointing to the paper, said :

"Well, young feller, I see that you and Cocky and Reggie are about to elope with my only Lodger."

I felt very foolish, and stammered out: "I can't make out how this got into this paper."

"But I can," he replied quietly, "our friend the Marquis is suffering from an attack of the gab. Good Lord! Jack," he continued more energetically, "do you suppose that I am a fool? Am I to imagine that the Major has been to Kimberley and annexed a mine? No. What does it mean then? Simply that some one's using him as a tool. Let me advise

you, young feller, as also Reggie and Cocky, to be very careful. What does this 'par' mean? Is any one ass enough to believe that poor old 'Jim' Dodd-Lauriston can buy a yacht and take you three-young fellers on a cruise at his own expense? Is the date of sailing right?"

"No," I said, "it is not."

"I was sure of it!" rejoined Anthony, waxing more vehement. "Don't you see what this means?" he added, striking *The Orb* with his fist.

I shook my head.

"Well, I'll tell you," he cried, if any one can cry aloud in a hoarse whisper. "It means this, that all of you, from the Major down to the cabin-boy, are screening some great ramp." He took up the paper. "It looks all square, fair, and above board, doesn't it, when you read that such a distinguished party is going on a cruise to the West Indies. You can trail red-herrings across the track of a yacht sometimes."

Anthony's tone annoyed me. "Look here, Tony," I retorted angrily, "you're annoyed because you haven't been asked to go with us, and that's why you talk a lot of nonsense about screens and red-herrings."

Anthony leapt to his feet, his eyes twitching with indignation.

"Look here, young feller," he snorted, bringing his fist down so heavily on the table that a claret glass rolled on to the floor and shivered in pieces. "I never expected to hear such words from you—to a man who'd stand by you through thick and thin. What do I care whether I'm invited or not. I wouldn't go if I was. You're simply a blidiot. You'd put your head into any lion's mouth—aye! or any lioness's either, if she'd only open it wide enough."

Then I got up, the blood running through my veins fast as the tide on the Solent, and exclaimed: "By George! I wouldn't stand such an insult from any one but you, Anthony Fuller. Let me go my way, and you go yours. I'll never set foot in your hellish club again." And I strode towards the door. Anthony stood gloomy and resolute. If he had only uttered one kind word, I would have stopped and listened to him. But he did not. He only said morosely:

"Good-bye, Jack Franklyn. If an angel appeared to you, you would still be a pig-headed numskull. I'm not going to try and stop you."

I boiled with rage, and flinging half a sovereign to the waiter in payment for my meal, rushed from the club, having for the first and only time in my life quarrelled with my best friend. I felt sick with anger, mainly, I believe, directed against myself for being so perverse, for I knew that my resentment against Anthony rested on no solid basis.

Our remaining time was occupied with the buying of those useless *impedimenta* which most travellers buy, and none find of any service. On the sea one wants ~~really nothing~~ but two thick serge suits, three or four flannel shirts, an oilskin coat, a P-jacket, a couple of pairs of flat-heeled boots, together with socks, collars, and pocket-handkerchiefs. On land, when travelling through civilised countries, the voyager wants even less, and the most successful trip I can call to mind was that made by a friend of mine from London to Teheran *via* St Petersburg and Constantinople. He started off in a tweed cloth suit, carrying his brushes, comb, razors and pipes in a bag slung by his side. He arrived quite comfortably at his destination, having bought such linen and clothes

as he required *en route*. On the present occasion Cocky, Reggie, and myself were the delight of the advertising outfitters. We might have been bound for the North Pole or Central Africa, judging by the infinite variety of our several equipments. I half expected that Anthony would make some sign of reconciliation, but he did not, and I was too stupidly proud to make the first advance. I wonder how many friendships, and even dearer ties, have been broken by the obstinate vanity (for it is nothing else) of one side or the other, or often of both? Cocky Larkhall and I arranged to go down to Gravesend on the 17th, and join *The Seven Sisters* when she came down the river on the following afternoon. Reggie Gregory and "Jim" Dodd-Lauriston proposed to follow early on the morrow by train to Tilbury, the Major having, as he explained, many tender adieus to make, while Reggie had some business of a financial nature to transact with his father. Sir Rupert was generally accessible to these arrangements, for the estates being entailed, and Reggie his heir, there was, as the latter observed, "generally as much corn for the sire as the colt," when their joint bill was discounted. I thought of writing to Anthony, but finally resolved to send him a telegram by the pilot when on board *The Seven Sisters*.

On arriving at Gravesend, Cocky and I put up at the Clarendon Hotel, a pleasant, old-fashioned inn with a lawn reaching down to the ever-changing Thames. Quite recently I have re-visited the riverain hostelry. Great and needed changes have been made with no sparing hand, and it is still one of the best and quietest retreats for a wearied Londoner wanting fresh air and a change of scene—ininitely

preferable to the over-noisy, over-loaded, over-dressed, and over-scandalous society of the Upper Thames, but, *laudator temporis acti*, I think I preferred the Clarendon of the days gone by. We spent the afternoon exploring the quaint highways and byways of Gravesend, whereof the majority of the inhabitants appear to be pilots, shrimpers, slop-sellers, tobacconists, and publicans. Who would ever suppose that Gravesend was once a fashionable *seaside* resort, and that bathing-machines extended along the front facing Tilbury Docks! Nowadays, thanks to the London County Council, the water of the tidal Thames is getting cleaner and clearer, year by year, but there must have been a time when the bathers from the beach plunged recklessly into the London sewage, which poisoned so many of the unfortunate passengers by the ill-fated *Princess Alice*. A curious, and to me a disquieting incident occurred, as Cocky and I were strolling down the hilly, foreign-looking High Street with the signboards of the shops almost shaking hands with one another across the thoroughfare. We were looking into a tobacconist's window, admiring the meerschaum pipes (for meerschaum pipes were in vogue then), when the reflection of a man's passing figure on the plate-glass made me start and look round. It was transitory and necessarily indistinct, but I cried: "By Jove! Cocky, there's that scoundrel Flaherty!"

"Where?" he exclaimed, clutching hard the black-thorn which he carried, and ready for action.

I strained my eyes up and down the street, but could see nobody in the least resembling my whilom preceptor and constant enemy. The man, whoever

he might have been, had disappeared with the quickness of the "greased lightning" of America. We were not long in discovering the bolt-hole. Just above the tobacconist's was a long, paved passage, seemingly the entrance to a public-house, but which, when we followed, brought us out opposite a church, and then, by a winding course, to the river front in West Street. Mr Flaherty, if it were he, had ample opportunities of dodging observation, always supposing that he had seen us. Charlie was of distinct opinion that the apparition of the shop window was not the man, who tried to murder me on the Granite Sea of the Waldstrasse.

"Depend upon it, Bingo, old man," he said, "that rascal wouldn't dare to show his ugly mug in England. He's probably doing time in America, or has been hanged out West. Let's go and pick a bit of grub, and spend the evening at Rosherville Gardens. I'm told it's rare fun to see the East-Enders tripping the light fantastic."

Still unconvinced that I was mistaken, I tried to dismiss Flaherty from my mind, and by the time we had finished an excellent dinner, whereat the different dishes of fish, flounder, *souché*, curried shrimps, white-bait and lobster à l'Américaine highly pleased us both, I had forgotten all about the ill-omened vision of High Street. While we were discussing our coffee and liqueurs, a telegram arrived from the Major to the effect that *The Seven Sisters* would be off the Terrace Pier between three and four on the following afternoon, and bidding us be prepared to go on board at once.

"It's a rum thing," observed Cocky, as he folded up the missive, "but our host, Mr Vincent P. Biggles-

wade appears to be lying, what your Wicked Uncle would call 'doggo.' A queer sort of cuss, I expect, but I don't care a brass farthing if we have a good time of it. Waiter, order a fly to take us to Rosherville Gardens."

The far-famed spot to spend a happy day was then much more frequented than it is in these latter times. Cheap excursions by boat and rail to places more remote from London, and, above all, bicycles, have reduced the every-day attendance at the pretty pleasaunce laid out in a disused chalk-pit of Northfleet. But even now, with increased energy and enterprise, such as the late-lamented "Druriolanus," Harris would have displayed, had he taken over Rosherville Gardens as he proposed, the once-popular resort could, I am certain, be once more brought to the fore. The grounds are unequalled in their beauty, and not frequented, as people are apt to imagine, by hordes of roughs and yahoos. On the contrary, I have never seen more orderly crowds than those who assemble there on bank-holidays, and other dates for making merry.

Cocky was in rare good humour. He patronised shooting-galleries, bowling-alleys, swings, Aunt Sallies, and other shows with unflagging energy, and he even danced with the damsels of Cockayne in the Baronial Hall, with a recklessness, which reminded me of Anthony Fuller's exploits at the Gorchester County Ball. I was persuaded to join the lancers, having, by the courteous introduction of the Master of the Ceremonies, secured the hand of a dark-eyed, oily-tressed Eastern maiden, whose warm fragrance reminded me of that balmy odour of Araby the Blest, which greet the nostrils of those passing by

the establishment of a celebrated perfumer in the Strand. I gathered that her name was Rebecca Vogelstein, and that she was employed at a tobacco manufactory in Shoreditch, but she was far too occupied in the serious execution of the poetry of motion to waste much breath on frivolous chatter. When the set was over, she graciously accepted my offer of refreshment, and having alleviated her honest thirst with a glass of port wine and lemonade, made me a curtsey which would not have disgraced a Duchess at the Court of Louis Quinze, and departed to plunge into the delirium of the schottische, on the arm of a stalwart Red Marine. •

"Pheugh!" gasped Cocky, when he too had handed over his partner; "I feel half boiled. Let's get outside, Bingo, and sit down in the cool somewhere."

We left the Baronial Hall at the west end by the Bowling-Alley, and strolled along till we came to a narrow path ascending to the top of the cliffs.

"Let's go up!" said Charlie. "We shall get a mouthful of fresh air up there." So we toiled up the steps of the miniature Alpine Pass, and found ourselves in a broad shaded alley, the only light afforded being by such moonbeams as managed to struggle through the overhanging trees. No contrast could have been greater than was afforded by the perfect stillness up here, and the clang and bustle down below. Only the faint strains of the band broke the silence. We walked noiselessly along in our thin pumps, smoking our cigars, neither of us speaking, when suddenly a couple, a man and woman, crossed the path some twenty yards ahead of us, and turned into one of the thickets provided with seats, overlooking the prospect of the Thames. As

they reached the opening in the bushes, the harvest moon shone full on their faces. I caught hold of Charlie's arm, and pointed nervously towards the inlet, for in the moonlight I had recognised Flaherty and Mrs Sharraton. I could not be mistaken. Trembling with excitement, I whispered my discovery to my companion. He grasped the situation in a moment.

"We must listen," he murmured.

We halted behind the dense covert. Mrs Sharraton and Flaherty were evidently in warm dispute, but in low tones.

"Why did I ask you to meet me here?" said Flaherty. "Because it's about the only place where we can talk without being discovered. That blasted Anthony Fullerr I know is on my track, and I saw that dirty whelp, John Franklyn, with his brother curr, Larkhall, in the High Street to-day. Luckily they didn't see me." Here Cocky pressed my hand. Flaherty continued: "But wait till I get them on board of *The Seven Sisters*. They may say good-bye to dearr old England for evver, as the song says." And the wretch chuckled with laughter, while I was all amazement at his revelation. What had Flaherty to do with the yacht or its owner?

"But, Con," said Mrs Sharraton, in a pleading voice, "why be so bitter against Jack Franklyn? O God! when I think of the letter you made me write to him at Bingenstadt." She broke down, and began to cry.

"Curre your snivelling, Minnie Singleton-Smith, or Sharraton, or whatever ye like to call yourrself——"

"You know what I can call myself," she retorted

fiercely. "I am your lawful wife, if that be any honour."

"Not to me," sneered Flaherty. "But since ye claim the position, be Baalzebub! I'll make ye obey me. D'ye understand, I'll make ye."

She did not answer him. Flaherty went on.

"Be Jabers! how I laugh when I think of the nate way in which I've flummoxed that ass of a Majorr, the prretentious omadhaun, by making him pull the chestnuts out of the firre. Ah! when Biggleswade *alias* Borrtmann *alias* 'Larry the Limner,' gits to Buenos Ayres, it's little eitherr of us will carre forr the rrest of the worrld."

I was trembling with rage, and so I could feel was Charlie, who held my hand tight, doubtless to prevent my rushing forward, and assaulting the scoundrel.

There was another pause; Mrs Sharraton said: "And what's to become of me, Con?"

"Ye may go to your Wicked Uncle, or to your Pious Cousin, or to the Divil for aught I mind, ye trollop. I'm well rrid of ye for ever! There's a couple of hundrreds for ye in the bank, which is morre than ye deserve. So we'll say good-bye." We could hear him get up.

"But I won't say good-bye," replied Mrs Sharraton passionately, stamping her foot. "If you don't take me with you, I'll show you up, you cruel villain."

"Whhat do you mane?" asked Flaherty hoarsely.

"I mean," she answered more impetuously, "that unless you'll give me my rights, I'll tell Jack Franklyn how you robbed him by your bigamous marriage with his aunt. I'll go straight from here

and denounce you at the police station as a thief, forger, and would-be murderer. I'll——"

Poor Minnie Sharraton never finished the sentence. With the growl of a wild beast he said: "Ye shall go to Hell firrst." There was a scuffle, and a piteous cry for help. We knew that Flaherty had seized her, as he had seized me on Mount Boracus. We rushed forward, as the wooden paling cracked and broke.

"Stop!" I cried wildly. "Stop! In the name of God stop!——" Mrs Sharraton was already over the edge of the cliff, her white hands clasped firmly round his legs, while he held his stick aloft to strike her on the head. At the sound of my voice he turned towards me, and let fall his arm.

"Jack Franklyn!" he cried in a horrified voice, and made a step nearer the brink. At the same instant Mrs Sharraton gave a convulsive struggle for existence. Flaherty uttered a great despairing cry and disappeared from our view. We could hear the blood-freezing sound of the falling bodies crashing through the brushwood and the tree-tops, and then all was still. The silence was disturbed only by the loud whistling of the steamers on the river and the faint strains of the band playing "Tommy Make Room for your Uncle." How at such an awful moment I recognised the tune is one of these psychological episodes which I will not pretend to explain. Al' I know is, that I never afterwards heard the air without shuddering as one stricken with ague.

* Charlie Larkhall and I sank aghast on to the bench so recently occupied by the villain and his victim, and covered our faces with our hands, as though to hide the awful sight, which the moonlight had

revealed to us. I do not know how long we remained dazed, but Charlie was the first to speak.

"What's to be done?" he muttered.

"I think we'd better go and see what's happened," I answered.

"Not for worlds!" he cried, starting to his feet, "for your own sake, and for that of others. We'll go to the gate and tell the man there to send assistance, as we think that some one's fallen over the cliff."

But when we got to the entrance we found a large crowd following two improvised stretchers.

"What's the matter?" stammered Charlie to one of the bystanders.

"A dreadful accident," he replied, "lady and gentleman fallen over the cliff, both stone dead, necks broken. They must have been very fond of one another, for the doctor who examined the bodies says that the man probably lost his life in trying to save the woman's, for her arms were fixed tight round his legs. Poor things! Poor things!"

Charlie and I walked back to the Clarendon Hotel like men who have stood on the frontier of the great Unknown Land, and well-nigh crossed the border. The first person whom we saw when we entered the hostelry was Anthony Fuller.

"Hallo, young fellers," he cried, "so you thought to give your faithful Anthony the slip, did you? But, Great Christopher! what's the matter with you both?"

"Brandy!" I gasped, "quick!"

When our senses were in some measure restored, we told him all. Anthony listened horror-struck, and then he said: "The drama is over perhaps, but there will be an epilogue to-morrow!"

CHAPTER
THIRTY-SIXTH•

MORE ADVENTURES
AT GRAVESEND. A
MATRIMONIAL
SURPRISE

HOW we spent that night at Gravesend, I cannot pretend to describe. Nobody attempted to explain matters. Cocky and I were feverishly anxious as to the sequel to the gruesome catastrophe in Rosherville Gardens, the while Anthony preserved the attitude of an all-knowing Sphinx. Neither of us dared or cared to question him, nor did he offer any explanation of his presence. All he said was: "You needn't trouble, young fellers, to move your traps on board of *The Seven Sisters*, because she will never sail," but he plied us so constantly with strong liquor, that I at least was glad to sink on my bed in a leaden sleep, which lasted without start or dream till long after sunrise. When I descended to the coffee-room I found Anthony in intimate conversation with a tall black-bearded man, so I went out on to the green where the pilots played bowls, and watched the surge and sway of the river. I knew that Charlie Larkhall's advice with regard to the fate of Flaherty and Mrs Sharraton was right, but knowing her, as I had done, for years, I felt ashamed that I could not, traitress though she had been, make some sign of forgiveness by recognising her body. As to Flaherty,

the rogue who had robbed me of my inheritance, and had tried to deprive me of existence, for him I had no compassion. Why should we pardon the misdeeds of the departed? *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* was probably the maxim of the astute Latin author, who, doubtless, feared the verdict of posterity. In so much as I am concerned, the verdict of the living is of but small moment, and in this gauge of humanity I fancy that, in a humble way, I share the feelings of the German Emperor, a potentate whom I have never ceased to admire, for his thorough exemplification of "don't-care-a-damnatism." He has his faults of impulsiveness, but he has done more for his country than ever did his ancestor, Frederick the Great — Man Annexer. If Wilhelm II. were in my sphere of life, I should like to have him as a friend, because he is a sort of Anthony Fuller in the purple.

I was reading *The Daily Telegraph's* account of "The Dreadful Accident in Rosherville Gardens," wherein the devotion of the unknown man to the unknown woman was highly extolled, when I was hailed by Cocky, who was not without traces in his manner of the shock which he had received on the previous evening. He held out his hand and wrung mine warmly.

"Dear old Jack!" he said, "I've been tortured by the thought. Could that horrible thing have ever happened to myself and Pauline?"

"Good God!" I returned, "how can you compare yourselves to those——" I stopped dead, overcome by my emotion. Charlie saw how much I was affected, and pointed out to me a great Orient steamer making all speed, accompanied by two tugs up-stream, like a whale escorted by sharks. We began talking about

shipping, with no other object than to lend distraction to our overwrought thoughts. There was some pretence at eating about one o'clock. Anthony Fuller did not join us, but after the meal was supposed to be over, he entered my room, which looked upon the river, and said: "*The Seven Sisters* is coming down. You two young fellers will have to come along with me."

We followed him mechanically, and embarked on a black-painted launch, whereon the black-bearded man, with whom we had seen Tony conversing, seemed in supreme command. Surely enough, *The Seven Sisters* glided down the stream and hove-to immediately opposite the Terrace Pier, where the Princess Alexandra of Denmark, great-great-granddaughter of our George II., landed in the most anti-foreign land in the world, to become the best beloved of the nation, next to the Queen. When we Britons talk of the "Princess" we refer to one Princess only, just as when we mention the "Prince," we have no other idea than that of the personality of the hard-working Heir-apparent.

It was one of those September afternoons when the wind shifts with the tide, and on this particular day the breeze and the flow were in conjunction. *The Seven Sisters* eased up, and heading to the stream, dropped anchor. I could not at once comprehend this manœuvre, but I soon perceived that had she not done so, she would speedily have been forced as far as Canvey Island.

Anthony Fuller had not made us acquainted with the black-bearded man on land. On the river he was more gracious, and presented us to Mr Felltree of Scotland Yard, who greeted us with a grim smile. He greeted us with but one observation: "You'll be

able to recognise Mr Vincent P. Biggleswade, I suppose." I replied, "Undoubtedly." Then we boarded *The Seven Sisters*. Neither the Major nor Reggie Gregory were to be seen. I longed to question Anthony Fuller, but I felt altogether too sick of life and its vagaries to risk any verbal duel with my sharp-tongued friend.

As to Cocky Larkhall, he was like a spectator of one of G. R. Sims's Adelphi dramas, knowing the end, but wondering how the deuce the playwright was going to bring matters to a conclusion. I know this, because in an excited soliloquy and whisper he suggested that Mr Felltree was the Messrs Gatti rolled into one, and that Anthony was "Dagonet" of world-wide fame. Ever since his scene-painting days at Eton, Cocky had a great liking for melodrama. We were received on board of the yacht with every courtesy, but I noticed that the captain was utterly dissimilar from her former skipper in appearance, being meek and mild, as a Sunday-school teacher used to be, before Mr Quinton Hogg expended £50,000 on the Polytechnic, and enabled his friends to travel to Switzerland, Norway, and Palestine. I have sometimes thought that Mr Hogg and Mr Studd might have extended these privileges to their old, and often not over-wealthy, schoolfellows at Eton.

Captain Shuffleton—such was the name of the commander of *The Seven Sisters*—received us with feigned delight. He was a weedy, blear-eyed, sandy-haired man, looking more like an ostler out of place than the skipper of a yacht, and I was especially struck by the tightness of his trousers. The crew were as sorry a lot as I ever looked upon, apparently

the scum and dregs of all nationalities, judging by their countenances, but they were all smartly attired in brand new guernseys and caps.

Mr Felltree made short work of Captain Shuffleton when he tackled him.

"Is Mr Biggleswade on board?"

"No, he isn't," replied Captain Shuffleton; "but what business is that of yours?"

"Only this," replied Felltree calmly, "that I hold a warrant for his arrest, and for yours, Benjamin Talbot *alias* Shackleton *alias* anybody else, and the whole of this ship's company."

Captain Shuffleton's jaw fell. "S'welp me, Mr Felltree!" he exclaimed, "I'm an innocent agent."

"So I supposed," returned Felltree grimly, "till you addressed me by my proper name. Now, where do you propose to pick up Biggleswade?"

"Here," answered Shuffleton, waving his dirty right hand over a space comprising the shores of Kent and Essex.

"Stow that," observed Felltree; "where's the boat coming from?"

Captain Shuffleton hesitated to reply.

"Come, Benjamin," said Felltree, "you know as well as I do that the game's up. Answer my question instantly, or—well, I won't threaten you, I'll make you speak." He said these words with a determination which forced Captain Shuffleton to reply.

"All right, guv'nor," he exclaimed nervously. "I've got to pick up the boss off Canvey Island."

"Very good," remarked Felltree, "steam ahead."

The skipper said something to the pilot, and *The Seven Sisters* headed down-stream. It was not long before Hadleigh Castle on the hill proclaimed

THE SCARLET CITY

that we were nearing the favorite hunting-ground of the Thames wild-fowler. As we slackened speed, a rowing boat put off from the bank. In it we could perceive a man wearing a long dark coat, urging the rowers to do their best, while he waved a red handkerchief to the yacht.

"Answer the signal," said Felltree to Shuffleton, "or ——"

The skipper did not wait for the explanation, but quickly flourished a green square of silk, which he produced from his pocket. As the boat came alongside, Felltree retired behind the funnel gear. Almost as he did so, a gentleman ascended the ladder, which had been put out. Cocky and I stood close by the gangway; Anthony was immediately behind us. The new arrival wore blue spectacles, red whiskers and hair to match. In so far as I could determine, he was not Mr Vincent P. Biggleswade. Captain Shuffleton was about to address him, when Mr Felltree stepped forward. The moment that the red-whiskered man caught sight of him, he whipped his hand into the pocket of his ulster and three little cracks resounded almost simultaneously. Something hard hit the funnel of the yacht. Five seconds afterwards Mr Felltree was shaking the red-whiskered man as a dog will a rat, while the crew gathered round with ominous imprecations. Then it was that Anthony Fuller leapt into the breach, as Felltree, quietly stripping the man from the boat of his rubicund wig and whiskers, revealed our host, Mr Vincent P. Biggleswade. ,

"Look here," cried Anthony, "let's have no nonsense! There's a gunboat out there not half a mile off, and if any man raises a finger we'll summon assistance." He pointed to a steam collier making for the

Nore; but he spoke with such authority, that with one accord the crew dispersed to the forecastle, leaving Mr Felltree still grasping his captive, with Captain Shuffleton looking on with an expression of mingled amazement and rage.

"Don't squeeze my neck so hard," muttered Mr Biggleswade, "I'm done."

"You never made a truer remark," said Mr Felltree, as he slipped the handcuffs over the wrists of the owner of *The Seven Sisters*. At the same time Mr Biggleswade was surrounded by six constables of the River Police, who appeared like goblins in the opening of a pantomime. It appeared that the black launch had followed us all unperceived, acting under instructions from Mr Felltree. That astute officer, addressing himself to Mr Biggleswade, observed after writing in a notebook, "You will be charged with attempted murder, as well as forgery and robbery."

Mr Biggleswade said nothing, but spat contemptuously on the deck.

Mr Felltree merely said to Captain Shuffleton, "Back to Gravesend as sharp as you can."

Captain Shuffleton called the Almighty to witness that he was wholly innocent, and the astounded pilot turned *The Seven Sisters* up-stream. The drama had taken less time to enact than I have in writing it down.

Anthony Fuller seemed in particularly high spirits, while Charlie Larkhall and I were reasonably dejected.

"Cheer up, young fellers," cried the proprietor of the Ibis, "and thank your stars that your Tony looked after you like a guardian angel; and also, I may add, did a good stroke of business for himself, thanks to the dear old Major's method of transacting private

business in public. You don't know perhaps that this Biggleswade is the head of the biggest gang of thieves and sharpers in the world. He, Flaherty, and one or two others, have been wanted for years. It won't be Felltree's fault if he and Shuffleton are seen again in smart circles for a very long time to come. But I must say that Biggleswade planned this *coup* in what I may call tip-top style. If he had got away, the Bank of Great Britain would have been had for nearly half a million sterling."

"How so?" asked Cocky, abruptly and even rudely. He felt savage at being mixed up in the business.

"Look here, young feller," replied Anthony, "leave all explanations to the lawyers and the law-courts. All I need tell you now is that even the Bank of Great Britain, after being cleverly lulled to sleep, gave good money for forged and stolen bonds of the Russian, Austrian, and Turkish Governments. This yacht was bought to carry off the swag. You, the Major, Reggie, and Jack, were the unsuspecting accomplices of the Rogue Master-General. You've had a narrow squeak for it, I can tell you, despite your contempt, Master Jack, for an old pal's suspicions."

"I'm awfully sorry, Tony," I said, holding out my hand, which he wrung warmly. "Since then no angry word has ever passed between us."

We found the Major, looking somewhat crestfallen, waiting with Reggie at the Clarendon, but under the influence of a superb champagne-cup, concocted by Anthony, he speedily recovered his usual spirits.

"By Jingo!" he exclaimed, "I always thought that there was a screw loose somewhere; just as I did when Pitron—that was the nickname of the late Prince of Limonia—tried to get me to elope with the Duchesse

de Calais. Pitron was as wily a bird as ever hopped a twig. One day he came to me at the Pomme-de-terre in Paris, and said, 'My dear Jim, will you do me a service?' 'A thousand services, if I can,' I answered. 'What is it?' 'Well,' he said, 'I have reasons for helping a young cousin of mine, Prince Henri de Lozanne, to escape the conscription. He is closely watched, and so am I, but I have promised to assist him, and I will. Now, will you, like a good fellow, take him by the late mail to Brussels to-night? He shall travel as your nephew. There will be no trouble. Deposit him at the Hôtel de l'Europe, and I will take him off your hands to-morrow morning.'

"This was rather a thin yarn to pitch to an old hand like myself, but I wanted to know the ins and outs of the intrigue, so I readily agreed to his proposal. He overwhelmed me with thanks, and I agreed to meet the interesting youth at the Gare du Nord, where I would recognise him by his wearing Pitron's signet ring on his little finger. The train started at midnight, and a short time before the clocks struck twelve, a stripling in a long fur coat, wearing a *pince-nez*, with a waxed black moustache, came up and extended his hand, on which I perceived Pitron's unmistakable ring. He said in a ready voice, 'Major Dodd-Lauriston, I believe?' I bowed, and produced the tickets, and ten minutes afterwards Prince Henri de Lozanne and I were bowling along to the Belgian frontier. I had never met so silent a young fellow; he wouldn't open his mouth, but coiled up in a corner like a dormouse in December. By-and-bye, just after we had passed the frontier, and had been passed by the Custom House officers, he fell asleep, and then I had leisure to examine his features. They

were not only feminine, but familiar. He was evidently very tired and also very hot, for in his sleep he clutched convulsively at his thick coat, trying to tear it open. Seeing what he wanted, I kindly assisted him, and unloosed the sable wrapping, when I was not surprised to discover that my companion was a woman of considerable pectoral development. Gently lifting her Alpine hat, I discovered that she wore a dark wig, from underneath which certain flaxen curls were straying. Of course, her moustache was false. Then her identity flashed across me, and after a moment's hesitation, I shook her rather roughly. She awoke with a slight scream. 'Madame la Duchesse de Calais,' I said, 'this is but a sorry trick which you and the Prince of Limonia have played upon an English gentleman.' She burst into tears. '*Mon Dieu !* monsieur,' she sobbed, 'I am truly sorry, but Pitron is so impetuous, he persuaded me with threats and entreaties, and I yielded. I have given up everything for his sake—position, name, and fame, even my husband, if he count for anything,' she added, with a contemptuous laugh, which seemed to do her good. 'I am at your mercy in this *travestie*. What do you propose to do?' 'That,' I replied, 'depends upon yourself. What do you wish?' 'To go back to Paris,' she answered without hesitation. 'Very good,' I said, 'but we have to go to Brussels first. It is this cursed male attire which troubles me. Have you got any lady's costume with you?' 'Certainly,' she answered, beginning to laugh, 'in that valise I have every requisite for my toilette, but how am I to manage?' 'Madame,' I said, 'you can rely on the honour of a Dodd-Lauriston! You have ample time to become yourself again. While you

are doing so, I will look steadfastly out of the window until you bid me look upon you again.' 'You are making sacrifices on my behalf,' she said penitently. 'No, madame,' I retorted, 'on my own.' She gave a deep sigh, and no doubt would have blushed had she been able. I undid the fastenings of her valise, which was as large as a small portmanteau, while she unlocked her dressing-bag. 'Madame,' I said, 'you will doubtless need some water. Here are two bottles of soda, and the cup of my drinking flask. You have a looking-glass?' 'Oh yes,' she replied, with a pretty *moue*. 'Now, monsieur, eyes right.' For the next half-hour I gazed into the darkness, illumined now and again by the great furnaces of smelting works, or the feeble lamps of the stations through which we dashed, reviling Pitron for putting me in such an awkward situation."

Here the Major paused and Anthony coughed. "Jim" proceeded: "At last the Duchess exclaimed—'You are at liberty to look.' I did, and beheld my fair companion restored to her own dainty self, robed in an exquisitely fitting olive-green gown trimmed with astrachan fur. She looked so radiant and charming that I ventured to raise her fingers to my lips. 'And now, monsieur,' she cried, 'I again ask, what do you propose to do?' 'To send you back to Paris by the Cologne Express,' I answered. 'Where is the Duke?' 'In Languedoc,' she replied. 'So much the better,' I said. 'You will travel by the train to the town from which you take your title, and catch the boat service to Dover. You will be in London before dinner-time. You have friends in London, madame?' 'Many,' she replied, 'but I do not quite see why you should send me across the sea,

which I hate so much.' 'Because,' I said, 'the Prince of Limonia will be in Brussels to-day; because from London you will telegraph to your husband stating that you have gone to England to visit your friends; because, in a word, you will disarm suspicion and avoid scandal.' 'Admirable!' she exclaimed, 'but how can I do all this by myself? And what about these disreputable garments?' and she kicked disdainfully with her *brodequin* the cast-off clothes of Prince Henri de Lozanne. 'Madame,' I replied, with no little fervour, 'if you will allow me, I will escort you across the Channel. Is that agreeable to you?' 'I gladly accept you as my cavalier,' she murmured with a bewitching glance. 'As to these sartorial disparagements,' I continued, 'they shall be sent to the proper quarter.' I rolled the coat, waistcoat, trousers, shirt, hat, and necktie into a bundle, and tied them up in a newspaper, after putting a card inside the package, inscribed: 'With Major Dodd-Lauriston's compliments. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum.*' The fur overcoat the Duchess begged me to retain. Until quite recently I kept possession of it, but it was so badly attacked by moth that I had to part with it. I addressed the parcel to 'H.R.H. the Prince of Limonia, Hôtel de l'Europe, Brussels.' I conveyed the Duchess to London, where she spent a very pleasant three weeks with her friends, among whom I am proud to say that I was included. The Duc de Calais approved in every way of his wife's visit to England: so did I, but Pitron did not. Indeed he never spoke to me afterwards, when he knew the truth."

"Where did he find that article, I wonder?" said Anthony. "But, in the present instance, where there's been so much lying about, I don't suppose that the

prisoners will give Felkree much trouble." Nor did they or Mr Justice Blackdose, who subsequently tried the case, and gave Biggleswade and Shuffleton the heaviest possible sentences. Curiously enough, the Major not only claimed but established, on the testimony of Mr Lightfoot, his right to own *The Seven Sisters*. He sold the yacht to a Midland Counties stocking manufacturer, who, electing to be his own skipper, ran her on the Goodwin Sands, where she foundered, without loss of life, just five weeks after he had come into possession of the ill-fated craft. The Major lived at the rate of £60,000 a year for a month after the completion of the sale, but eventually returned to his bedroom at the Ibis.

Gravesend had surely been the scene of two acts in tragic drama, but it was destined to supply a third. On the morning after the arrest of Biggleswade, when we were breakfasting prior to departure, I was handed an envelope by the waiter. It contained a printed slip on which was written, "*Morning Post*," and ran as follows:—

"We understand that a marriage has been arranged between Lady Beatrice Belfisle, only daughter of the Duke of Middlesex, who is travelling on the Continent, and Prince Emilio Cassarabia, Vice-Chamberlain to the King of Italy, and Hereditary Protector of the Pontine Marshes. The nuptials will shortly be celebrated in London according to the rites of both the Church of England and the Church of Rome, the Pope, having granted a dispensation in view of the high station of the contracting parties."

I felt altogether stunned by this intelligence, and mechanically examined the envelope and the slip. The writing on the one was unknown to me, the style of type on the other was undoubtedly that used by

the fashionable organ of Wellington Street. My first impulse was to show the cutting to Anthony and my other friends; my second, to crush the paper into my pocket and say nothing. While I was debating, a telegram was handed to me. It read:

"I sing your new song, 'The Scarlet City,' to-night. Come and hear your penitent Tabby."

No message could have arrived more opportunely. I would certainly go and hear Tabby, and in a frame of mind which I could not pretend to analyse, I shook the chalk dust and shrimp shells of Gravesend off my feet, and was so extraordinarily lively on our journey up to town, that Anthony Fuller declared that I must either be drunk or mad. As a matter of fact, I believe that I was in both moods, for I did, before leaving the hotel, what I had never attempted, and should have refused to do, under ordinary circumstances. Alone, and with no qualms of conscience, I consumed two quart bottles of champagne in my bedroom. The liquor apparently did not disturb my power of observation, but it certainly embarked me into a state of dangerous excitement. Anthony Fuller was quite right.

CHAPTER
THIRTY-SEVENTH

"*THE SCARLET
CITY*" SCORES A
SUCCESS, AND
FINISHES ME

WHEN we reached Charing Cross Station I made an excuse for quitting my friends, saying that I was not well or something of the kind, and promising to see them on the morrow, took a cab to the Tavistock Hotel in Covent Garden. I noticed that Anthony would fain have stopped me, but I had an unconquerable desire to be by myself, a strange feeling with me, for I have always liked the society of others in no measured degree. I chose the Tavistock because I felt pretty certain that even Anthony's penetrating mind would not think of looking for me at the old-fashioned hostelry. I ordered some dinner for seven o'clock, and then drove, though it was past four o'clock, to the office of Messrs Tupgill & Tintax, the lawyers whom I had employed to look after my affairs after the failure of Gorton & Goole, the bankers. The senior partner was away, but Mr Theodore Tintax, the junior of the firm, a leader of the *beau monde* of Bloomsbury, condescended to receive me after I had fumed for nearly an hour in the ante-room. I am afraid that I was not looked upon by Messrs Tupgill & Tintax as a very paying client. However, eventually I was ushered into Mr Theodore's sanctum. He wore a

waxed moustache and a bunch of lilies-of-the-valley, while the pocket-handkerchief, with which he waved me into a chair, loaded the atmosphere with the fragrance of lavender.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr Franklyn," he observed, "but I am terribly busy, hence my being here at so late an hour. The whole of the affairs of the firm rests on my shoulders. I feel quite an Atlas. Not the geography book, you understand," he explained affably, "but the fabled supporter of the globe. Now, what can I do for you?"

I told him as well as I was able, and not without considerable agitation, the tragedy of Rosherville Gardens. As I proceeded Mr Theodore listened intently, but without saying a word. He only took notes on a piece of foolscap. At one moment, when I was describing the struggle on the edge of the cliff, he poured out some brandy from a decanter standing on a dumb waiter by his elbow, and motioned me to drink it. I did so, and felt better. "Well," said I, when I had finished, "what do you think of it all?"

"It's extraordinary," he replied slowly. "Now there are several points to be noted. *First*—and here I thoroughly agree with your friend, Mr Anthony Fuller—no good would be done by your coming forward to give evidence about the dreadful way in which Flaherty and Mrs Sharraton met with their death. *Secondly*, Flaherty must be identified. *Thirdly*, if he was bigamously married to your esteemed great-aunt, the Honourable Penelope Mac-Washington, the name of his first wife must be discovered. Of course, I take it for granted that it

must have been this Mrs Sharraton, but who is to prove it?"

A light broke upon my brain. "Mr Tintax," I gasped, "I'm sure I know the man, and so does Anthony Fuller; but where he is at present I don't think either of us could guess. We left him at the Dolphin Hotel at Chichester after Goodwood Races. His name is Macdougall Bingham. He came unexpectedly into a great deal of money some little time back, and has, I believe, been more or less drunk ever since."

"Naturally," remarked Mr Theodore, waving the lavender-scented handkerchief before his nostrils, as though to dispel the presence of Macdougall Bingham, reeking with whisky. "But tell me, what do you know of this individual?"

I gave him as well as I could the strange story of the finding of the Wealthy Waif.

"Hum! hum!" said Mr Theodore, "then I clearly perceive that your friend Mr Fuller, and this Captain Bolitho, against whom, if I am not mistaken, we hold several unsatisfied judgments, are the proper persons to trace Macdougall Bingham. But there is no time to be lost, remember."

"I will see Anthony Fuller to-morrow morning," I exclaimed. "Do you think that there is any chance of my recovering any part of my aunt's fortune?"

"That is a question which I cannot possibly determine, Mr Franklyn, but rely on our firm looking well after your interests," said Mr Theodore, with a fascinating smile. In parenthesis I may add that the firm did—and also after their own.

As I sped back to the Tavistock, I felt that I had not wasted my time, for Mr Theodore, with all his

foppishness, was a very shrewd lawyer, as I knew from my experiences in the affairs of Gorton & Goole. But all my reflections were overshadowed by the news of the engagement of Lady Beatrice Belleisle. And yet, what right had a destitute vagabond like myself to dare to hope for any closer acquaintance, than that of a friend, with the Lady of the Coral Hand, and perhaps, I thought, not even that privilege. If you place your love on the top of the Cross of St Paul's Cathedral, and have not got the wherewithal to pay the fee of admission even so far up as the Whispering Gallery, you had much better bestow your respectful admiration on the statue of Queen Anne in the churchyard below. No, I came to the conclusion that Tabby Bottlestrap was about the only goddess to whom I could aspire, and pulling out her telegram from my pocket, I re-read it with increased delight, the more so, perhaps, as the news that she was about to sing "The Scarlet City," would undoubtedly lead to some satisfactory pecuniary dealings with Mr Joskins, the great music publisher. The song in question was one I should have thought rather beyond the range of Tabby's power of expression; but she had taken a fancy to the indifferent words, and Mr Tobit, who was bitterly angry with Anthony for having paid him ready money for the score of *The Pet of Britannia*, now sent into the provinces, had set them to very melodious music—"Something, my boy," he observed, "that will make the women—God bless 'em!—wish they'd brought plenty of calico to wipe their peepers with." Tabby was now earning the salary of an Under-Secretary of State at the Piccadilly Pantechnicon, and had the best "turn" of the evening, superior even to that of Signor Brunoni with his performing

bears; or that of Mdlla Chiquot, who sang naughty French songs, which neither the Middlesex magistrates nor her auditors understood, but which the latter pretended to; or that of the Great O'Vamper, whose patriotic force had, it was whispered, caused Prince Bismarck himself to quake in his shoes, and the Sultan of Turkey to send a protest to the British Ambassador. At the "Pic-pan," as it was called, Miss Evelyn Cavendish was undoubtedly the bright particular star of the evening. Being known to the management, I was accommodated with a seat in the directors' box, colloquially known as the "Umbrella Stand," on account of the abnormal nasal developments of the usual occupants. I had not seen Tabby since our memorable dispute at Mr Biggleswade's abode, and I awaited her appearance with feverish anxiety, the while drinking more champagne than was good for me, with several of the affable "Umbrellas." At last a burst of cheering from all parts of the crowded house proclaimed the advent of Miss Evelyn Cavendish, who bounded on to the stage in the costume of a burlesque page, and rattled through a song telling of the adventures of this mediæval young blood in modern London. The chorus, in so far as I can remember, ran something like this:—

"I never lose myself, dear boys,
Though often in a fog,
But round the town,
Now up, now down,
I am a jolly dog.
Bow! wow! wow! wow!
I am a jolly dog!"

Tabby gave half a dozen different expressions to the "bow-wow-wow-wow" of the chorus, which the

audience took up lustily. The song did not please me at all, but it was vociferously applauded. When Tabby reappeared to some soft and sensuous strains, I could hardly believe my eyes. She was no longer the dashing boy, but a quiet, modest-looking shop-girl in black, with white collar and cuffs and smooth brown hair. A dead silence fell over the house at this unlooked-for apparition. Then Tabby began her ballad :—

“ Once on a time a country maid,
 “ Timid of strangers, and all afraid,
 To London would go, and more's the pity !
 For she was as pure as a maid should be—
 Innocent, beautiful, fancy free.
 There's the day for the bird that sings on the tree,
 But not in the Scarlet City.

Refrain.

‘ O Scarlet City, made red with wine,
 Bitterer far than the Dead Sea brine
 Where are the hearts once trustful and true,
 That are broken, O Scarlet City, in you ?
 Where are the many gone down for the few ?
 Why must we quaff of the hyssop and rue ?
 Scarlet City ! Scarlet City !
 Why must we drink of the hyssop and rue ?
 Have pity ! pity ! pity ! ”

The house was hushed, as the orchestra played a few weird, wailing bars. Then Tabby began again, but now she was different in her delivery, singing with devil-may-care passion.

“ Once on a time that country maid,
 Forward became, and all unstaïd,
 All London would know, and more's the pity !
 All the glitter of gilt that is not gold !
 All vanity bought where the vain are sold,
 Where the breath is as short as the hearts are cold
 In the glare of the Scarlet City !

Refrain.

"O Scarlet City, the blood of time
Is your essence of life distilled from crime !
What is the life-race in which you strive ?
What is the chariot you must drive ?
What are the victims on which you thrive !
The living are dead, and the dead alive,
Scarlet City ! Scarlet City !
We are the victims on which you thrive !
Scarlet City ! dead yet alive !
Have pity, pity, pity !"

As Tabby repeated the refrain of the song, she poured such vehemence into her voice that I was spell-bound, and when she literally wailed the last line, and sank upon her knees, there was as profound a silence as when she had entered, for the space of many seconds. Then there went up a great shout as if some slow match had reached the dynamitic enthusiasm of the audience. Mr Tobit was quite right ; there were handkerchiefs all over the place. Tabby was called and recalled, and the last time that she came before the curtain she cast a look of triumphant joy to me. I was completely entranced, and hurried round to the stage door. It seemed ages to me before she made her appearance. There was a crowd round her brougham, but I paid not the slightest attention to anybody. Curiously enough, I made no attempt to go inside, though, of course, I had the *entrée*. I waited as patiently on the pavement, as I have often seen tight-stricken youths hanging about the doorkeeper's entrance at the Spree. Presently a tall man issued forth. I grew hot and angry when I recognised Sir Percy Spalding. He took no notice of me, but jumped into a cab and drove away.

"Why should I be annoyed?" I argued with

myself. "Tabby is not my property. No doubt Spalding has been to congratulate her, as I ought to have done."

I turned towards the door, when Tabby came swiftly out, holding forth both her hands.

"Ah, Jack!" she said, "I knew you would be here. Let us go and have some supper at Verey's; it's the quietest place in London, and I'm so hungry."

There is no necessity for me to detail all the occurrences of that pleasant repast, but while we were enjoying the *mayonnaise* of crayfish (not vulgar lobsters, but their dear little freshwater counterparts of the Rhineland) there came a knock at the door, and the waiter presented me with a card on a salver. It bore the name of Mr William Joskins.

"The gentleman would like to see you at once," said Benedict, the discreet waiter, "but if you like, sir, I can say that you have gone."

"By no means," I cried, much amused at the music-monger's persistency. "Show him up!"

Mr Joskins came in, more red and radiant than ever.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, mopping his face, "run you to earth after all. Miss Cavendish, my best respects, you're an *artiste* and an angel rolled into one!"

"Sit down, Mr Joskins, and fall to," I said, "but how on earth did you track us here?"

Mr Joskins laughed slyly as he tackled the fare. "Ah! when you were hanging about the stage-door of the Pic-Pan you didn't perceive yours truly. But I was close beside you, and heard what Miss Cavendish said about supper, and here I am. You'll excuse the liberty I've taken, but I heard Harmonicum of Bond Street ask the stage doorkeeper for your address. That was quite enough for me."

"Well, Mr Joskins," I said, "we're very glad indeed to see you, but what can I do for you?"

Mr Joskins tapped his proboscis with his fat forefinger and winked his eye. "It isn't what you can do for me, Mr Franklyn, but what both of you can do for me! Business is business." Here he produced his well-remembered pocket-book, and his stylographic pen, and asked:—

"Now, what shall we say in the first place for the song?"

"I can't sell it, Mr Joskins," I said, "without Tobit's assent."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the music publisher. "Little Tobit's all right: signed his agreement an hour ago, £50 down, a diamond ring not less than £7, 10s, a hundred guineas on paper, the arrangement of half-a-dozen quadrilles at a tenner the set—I mean a century, of course—and three boxes of Egyptian cigarettes. Tobit's settled—now, what about you? Look, Mr Franklyn, I'll give you a 'monkey' for 'The Scarlet City' and four others, provided that Miss Cavendish will sing them."

"Of course I will," laughed Tabby, who was much amused at the publisher's abruptness.

"Stop," said Mr Joskins, opening his pocket-book, "but we must have that in black and white. Ladies' memories, I regret to say, are sometimes rather short. Now, I don't want you to warble for nothing, Miss Cavendish. What say you to a fourpenny royalty? That's a liberal offer, and I'm peeling the apple very fine, but I'm not going to let Harmonicum best W. J. Shall we say done? A royalty in your case is the better plan, because every time you sing you'll know

that it means so much in your purse. You can have a cheque on account—say fifty?”

“As you please,” replied Tabby, “but, Jack dear, you’ll have to look after the royalty.”

“I expect,” chuckled Mr Joskins, “that a certain queen of song is the only royalty that Mr Franklyn cares to look after.”

Then he set to work with his agreement forms and his cheque-book, and in less than a quarter of an hour, with the assistance of Benedict, all was signed and sealed.

“I’ve got a copy of the song from Tobit,” said Mr Joskins, rising. “Let me have the four others at your earliest convenience. Now, good-night. I’ve got to catch the last train to Surbiton. Miss Cavendish, if you want an engagement for three years certain, I’ll put up the money.”

“No, thank you, Mr Joskins,” said Tabby, “I don’t like long engagements.”

“Quite right, Miss,” cried Mr Joskins, “always strike when the iron’s hot, but don’t forget the proverb about marrying in haste. Ha! ha! ha!” and roaring at his own wit, Mr Joskins bustled from the room.

“What a funny, nice old man!” cried Tabby. “He seems to throw about cheques like racing men do coppers, when they’re going to the Derby.” This called up the disagreeable remembrance of Sir Percy Spalding.

“I say, Tabby,” I asked rather moodily, “what was Spalding doing at the Pic-Pan to-night?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” she answered. “I think that he’s rather mashed on that girl who does the trapeze business. I didn’t see him—indeed, I rarely do.”

I felt very much relieved at this information.

"Tabby," I said, "I want you to do me a favour. Will you?"

"Of course I will—anything for you, dear Jack," she answered, with a long languorous look. "What is it?"

"I want you," I said, holding up Mr Joskins's cheque, "to take this as a little tribute to your talent."

Her eyes glittered with pleasure, but she cried: "Oh, no! Jack, I couldn't think of it. If you want to give me anything, you may give me a kiss," and she held out her arms toward me.

It was the story of the Bottlestrap Hotel, on the first day of the Eton and Harrow match, after we had been to the Alhambra. We were mad with the joy of reconciliation, and as she pressed her lips to mine I forgot all but the desire of possessing her for ever.

"Tabby," I whispered hoarsely, "we must never part. Will you, my darling, be my wife!"

Her bosom heaved up and down as she pressed me closer to her. "My own love!" she murmured, "shall I ever be so happy again?"

It was late on the following day when I went to find Anthony Fuller at the Ibis. I felt metriculously merry, and as obstinate as a zebra, for I had a presentiment that Tony would certainly oppose my proposed nuptials. I found the worthy club-proprietor discussing gin-cocktails with Major Dodd-Lauriston, who had once more taken up his position as the One and Only Lodger, and from off whose ample shoulders the episode of the arrest of Mr Biggleswade had fallen as smoothly, as the promises from the mouth of a Parliamentary candidate. They hailed me with much enthusiasm.

"I'm glad to see you, young feller," said Anthony,

"because I thought yesterday, that you were going to join the Salvation Army, judging by the delirious manner in which you carried on in the train."

"Yes, by Jove!" put in the rightful Marquis; "you reminded me of my poor brother after he had broken the bank at Monte Carlo, and wanted to fight the entire Monagasque Army at a louis a head."

I chatted with them for a little while, and then told Tony that I wanted to talk with him on important private business.

"Don't let me be in the way," said the Major, "I must go and find out what those Scotland Yard pirates have done with my yacht." And he swaggered out of the club.

Anthony and I went up to his little private office. There I told him of my interview with Mr Theodore Tintax.

"It's a funny coincidence, young feller," he observed, "but I've got to see Bolitho this very afternoon with regard to that fool Bingham. The Captain has got him sober by keeping him under lock and key, and I'll take care that he takes him down to Gravesend for the inquest. Now, is there anything else?"

"Anything else?" I stammered.

"Yes, anything else," retorted Anthony. "You can't deceive me, young feller. I suppose you think I didn't spot you behind the curtains in the 'Umbrella Stand,' at the Pic-Pan last night. I suppose you imagine that I don't know you went off with Tabby Bottle-strap after her big success, which it undoubtedly was, and I also suppose you surmise that I am unaware of the fact of your not having been to your rooms last night. But all your suppositions are wrong. Moreover, I met Mr Joskins this morning, and

gathered something about chickens, champagne, and cheques."

"By Jove! Tony," I said, "you must be the devil himself."

"Very likely," he retorted coolly, "but I only hope you haven't been making a fool of yourself with that artful hussy, Tabby."

"Artful hussy!" I cried, "she's the best and most disinterested girl in the world! Do you know that I offered her this cheque last night, for £500, and she wouldn't take it?"

"Whew!" whistled Anthony, "why wasn't I Tabby?"

I would not lose my temper with Anthony Fuller again. I loved him too much. "Look here, Tony," I said gently, "let us have no more silly chaff about Tabby, for she has consented to be my wife."

Anthony leapt on to the floor from the table on which he had been sitting. "Your wife!" he echoed. "Oh! you don't mean that?" he added very sadly.

"I do!" I answered stubbornly. "Do you oppose the banns?"

Anthony seemed quite upset by my communication. He never said a word, while I sullenly chewed the stump of my cigar which had gone out. After a while he spoke in very hoarse tones.

"Jack Franklyn," he said, "it isn't for me to advise you on what is right and what is wrong in a matter which concerns or ought to concern your best feelings, but I implore you, as a pal, to think the matter over. Don't do anything rash."

"I'm not doing anything rash," I said doggedly. "I'm doing what an honourable gentleman ought to do."

"If that's the case," replied Anthony, with a feeble attempt at one of his usual twinkles, "I'll say no more, but wish you long life, health, and prosperity. But remember that I told you to think it over, even though I ask you to let me be your best man. Come and have a drink." His voice shook with emotion as he wrung my hand.

Thanks to Anthony's perseverance, the identity of Flaherty was established by Macdougall Bingham. The Wicked Uncle was so overcome by the death of Mrs Sharraton, and the news of my approaching marriage, that he retired to a shooting-box in Scotland, whence he answered no letters.

Three weeks afterwards, Tabby and I were united at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Covent Garden, by special license of the Bishop of London. During the whole of the time preceding the ceremony, I was in that indescribable state in which I had left Gravesend, purblind to everything but a delirious determination to carry out what I had undertaken. Anthony fulfilled his promise of being my best man. Charlie Larkhall and Reggie Gregory sent me nuptial presents, but excused themselves from attending the church, which was crowded with music-hall *artistes* and chorus-girls. The Major bloomed with white gardenia. Tabby, covered with orange blossoms, was given away, at her own request, by Sir Percy Spalding. I scarcely noted the officiating clergy (there were two of them) till it came to the signing of the register in the vestry. Then the face of one of the priests seemed somewhat familiar to me. I looked at him inquiringly. He gave a hard smile. "Ah, my dear nephew," he exclaimed, "we have met before in this neighbourhood." He

was none other than my Uncle Theobald, the Rector of Glentroughton, upon whom, in days gone by, Anthony had played the trick at Evans's. But before I could speak to him he had disappeared, leaving me not altogether satisfied with the situation.

Mrs Bottlestrap, more pink and golden than ever, gave a splendid wedding breakfast at her hotel, and mingled copious glasses of champagne with Niagaras of tears, which, however, did not interrupt her power of suction. Anthony Fuller made a smart speech and I a stupid one. Finally, we left for Brighton, there to spend the honeymoon, amid showers of rice and slippers. Any one having further interest in the proceedings should consult the current number of the *Era*.

When in the train, I noticed as we were passing over Battersea Bridge that on Tabby's left wrist was a diamond bangle.

"Who gave you that?" I asked.

"Percy Spalding," she answered.

"Give it to me," I said. She handed it to me, and I flung the bangle into the Thames. "There," I cried, "let the past be buried with that wretched ornament."

Tabby looked very angry for an instant, and then she said softly, "I say 'Amen' to that, Jack." She was looking very beautiful in her dark blue velvet travelling dress, and I took her to my heart.

"What was your mystery about me?" I asked presently.

She paused, and then replied, "Well, part of it was that auntie is really my mother. Does that vex you, dear?"

"Not at all," I answered as gaily as I could. "I had guessed it without looking at the register in the church."

"I forgot the register," she said, biting her lips.

"And the other part?" I asked.

"Oh, that," she replied, "you must wait for. I must have a little bit of a secret with which I can tease my husband."

And so we set sail on the great, unfathomable, matrimonial sea, which encompasses the earth and all who dwell therein, is never without its storms to the Many, and without its calms to the Few.

CHAPTER *MARRIED LIFE AND*
THIRTY-EIGHTH *ITS SEQUEL*

OUR honeymoon at Brighton was not unhappy, save for the fact that Tabby was constantly meeting men and women, who greeted her with a familiarity which I bitterly resented. Indeed, I forbade her to do more than acknowledge their cordiality, if such an epithet can be legitimately applied to the vulgar leers of the curious and ill-conditioned. For the first time in my life I felt that I was *déclassé*. When I first sought the precincts of Bohemia, and subsequently, when I became a sojourner in that commonwealth, I never felt that I had forfeited my "Uitlander" rights. But now by my alliance with a female citizen of the republic without letters, I became "one of them," and was "Jack," with reptiles, whom I would have trodden under my feet in days gone by. For Tabby's sake I did not complain. Only I tried to do what I could not achieve—remain a gentleman the while a bourgeois of Prague. We had not been three days in Brighton before I received a letter from Anthony, telling me that he and Captain Bolitho had unearthed Macdougall Bingham in a flash West-end house, and that by dint of making him believe that he stood in danger of durance vile, they had taken him to Graves-

end, where he had formally recognised the body of Flaherty at the Coroner's inquest. Anthony also informed me that the One and Only Major was about to present a fresh petition to the House of Lords on the subject of this Marquisate. "But," wrote Tony, "I think he would do far better to induce his relatives to increase his allowance, for since *The Seven Sisters'* affair, he won't travel in 'busses, and I can't stand his taking cabs by the day."

I may here dismiss Macdougall Bingham from these pages, by stating that he ended his social career by stealing two umbrellas from a club, to which he formerly belonged. Tony and I helped him till he passed away, a lost soul needing salvation.

Mr Theodore Tintax also communicated with me, declaring that, in his opinion, the residue of my great-aunt's property might be restored to me. When his bill was paid, I received a sum of £198, 13s. 8d. per annum, for, despite Mrs Sharraton's assurance to me at Bingenstadt, it appeared that George was in entail, and that the capital could not be touched. This solution of the question, however, was not evolved till long after we had left Brighton, and the blood-suckers of the Law-Courts had derived their accustomed nourishment at my expense. I do not blame sharks from seeking their nutriment. They must live like wolves, hyenas, and jackals, if they can, but the honesty of the law is the dishonesty of the public. The Lord Chief-Justice of England, himself an Irishman, kicked off at Rugby football the other day, and improved the occasion with an oration. I wonder if he knew how many of his humbler fellow-subjects would have gladly kicked him off, had he been the leathern egg?

On our return to town we took up our quarters at the Queen's Cross Hotel, pending the discovery of the flat, which it was Tabby's desire we should occupy. The Queen's Cross was one of those caravanserais, which are conducted on the most perfect system of high British morals by the most intelligent of German managers. Anything or anybody foul or unclean was promptly catapulted from the portals of the Queen's Cross. The manager, supported by a board of impeccable directors, made Vice an impossibility and Virtue a necessity. But he and his directors never failed to charge us a guinea a week for attendance, which we rarely received. At last we took the upper part of a house, falsely described as a flat, over an advertisement office in the neighbourhood of the British Museum. It was an inconvenient domicile, but one just suited to the taste of my wife, for it was within easy distance of the playhouses and music-halls, and also of the shops of the streets named Regent, Oxford and Bond. Our housekeeping arrangements were on the hand-to-mouth plan. I provided the hand and Tabby the mouth. It was her special desire to be always in the fashion. If she had read in *Gentlewoman's Gossip* or some such publication, that the Duchess of Longacre had worn pea-green silk stockings at a Court ball, she would have insisted on supplying herself with hosen of the same hue. She had less idea of making both ends meet than a dog, who, if he cannot eat his bones, buries them for future sustenance.

But on the whole we jogged along the railroad of life pretty amicably, till a certain Mrs Bordeaux appeared upon the scene. When and where Tabby

made her acquaintance 'I am not able to state, but that she was originally a chorus girl at the Spree Theatre is certain. Bloated in person, possessing buniony feet, which threatened to burst her patent leather boots, and a leer becoming a female satyr, Jessie Bordeaux was nevertheless looked upon by certain leaders of the lower theatrical circles as a Prophetess and Leader. It would be impossible to calculate how many young women she had ruined by her fatal advice, as to their progress in life. In her way she was clever, and I have heard that a Colonial bishop, unacquainted with the ethics of London life, who met Mrs Bordeaux at a Pan-Anglican garden party, declared her to be the most thorough student of the Old Testament, whom he had ever come across. But had she lived in the days of the New Gospel, Jessica Bordeaux ought certainly to have been one of the victims of the Massacre of the Innocents. It will readily be admitted that a lady, who could extract such eulogy from a "returned empty," was well able to command in less sacerdotal society. I disliked this woman from the first, but Tabby believed in her, and was fascinated by her specious conversation. There is no worse enemy to a husband than a wily female. The gay Lothario of commerce we can fight with rapier or fist, but the dynamitress of domestic felicity can only be removed by slamming the front door in her face. And even then she will slink in again by the scullery window. Mr Bordeaux was a young gentleman of fortune, who believed that in the person of his older spouse he had secured a prize of infinite worth. He made every sacrifice which a man could to give his wife all she could desire, and he failed. I am not a malevolent

man, but I rejoiced when Mr Bordeaux, some years after the time to which I refer, seized the opportunity of leaving his wife to the congenial society of the lower crust of humanity. He was not ill-named "The Pigeon," and she "The Hawk." My wife's constant attendance at Mrs Bordeaux's parties entirely changed my method of life. When she began coming home in the small hours of the morning, so did I, and many and many a night did I spend at the Ibis, wishing for the day. Nevertheless, I was not idle according to my lights. I was fortunate enough to send in an article on the capabilities of the British Empire to the *Weekly Lamp*, which so pleased the editor, one of the few literary giants, who condescended to read contributions from outsiders, that he invited me to become, not a member of his staff, but a dealer in trifles, which would be considered. The *Weekly Lamp* paid very liberally for these flashes, and, thanks to Anthony Fuller, I had a burlesque on the subject of Ulysses and Penelope accepted by the management of the Commonwealth Theatre, a playhouse belying its title, inasmuch as it was the sole property of one Nicholas Kopfto, an elderly gentleman of Teutonic extraction, who, having made his money by plumbing, had resolved to restore the glory of the British Drama by introducing pieces in which costume should be subservient to shapely effect. For quite inadequate reasons I had opposed Tabby returning to the stage after our marriage. Like a fool, I imagined that, if she were to keep off the boards, her interests would be centred in our home. But, as I have already said, my wife had no domestic tastes. The society of Mrs Bordeaux and similar professional ladies was more dear to her than would

have been association with the highest and most select circles.

But, truth to tell, nowadays there is but little to choose between the manners and morals of Belgravia and Bohemia. I remember that when Count Kromesky visited London about this period he was sitting in the stalls at Covent Garden Theatre one evening, and on his immediate left was the box of the loveliest peeress of the day. At the *en'acte* the Russian diplomatist rose and surveyed the house from a coign of vantage immediately below where the great lady was sitting. Presently she hailed a youth who was passing, and Kromesky bent his ear to catch the pearls of speech which would drop from her perfect lips.

This is what she said to the young man: "I say, Charlie, come and mash me for a bit, my Johnny's gone to get a toothful of moist."

I asked Kromesky if he was surprised at this language.

"I was at first," he replied with one of his quiet smiles, "but subsequently I reflected that the vulgar herd in England has invariably swallowed the upper classes. *Teste* the English language itself. The Normans were talked out of their native French by the Anglo-Saxons. On the other hand, in Russia there are hundreds of nobles who cannot speak the Muscovite tongue correctly."

However, to revert to my burlesque and the Commonwealth Theatre. I soon discovered that one potent reason for the acceptance of my piece by Mr Kopfto, was the belief that, by doing so, he could induce Tabby to appear again, and one of his first moves was to invite my wife and myself to dinner, when he proposed to give her a

salary of £60 a week if she would play Ulysses in the Extravaganza.

"Mr Franklyn cannot object," he said, "for being the father of the play he can keep an eye on you, my dear, and you on him; Zee! it will be to your mutual advantage." I need scarcely say that I did all I could to prevent this arrangement, but I was powerless to withstand the alliance of Mr Kopfto and Tabby. Even Anthony Fuller was against me. "It's the best thing that could happen, young feller," he said, when I consulted him. "There are some women made for bringing up children and making rice-puddings, there are others fashioned for drinking champagne and leaving children to other people. Your wife belongs to the latter division. I'm not going to say anything against her, nor ask you why you never ask me to your house, but take my word for it, Tabby will be better employed in earning her own living than gadding about with the Bordeaux set. 'The Hawk' isn't good company for any decent bird. And then there's the salary. I don't suppose you can shell out for your wife's finery without running into debt, and let me tell you it's better for Tabby to get money on the square than—he stopped abruptly and added—"land you in the Bankruptcy Court."

So Tabby appeared as Ulysses, and made a great success. As the greatest living critic of the day observed: "What was it we went to see at the Commonwealth? Was it the wealth of stage decoration or the galaxy of choreographic beauty? No! it was Miss Evelyn Cavendish happily restored to her congenial sphere. Bold without being coarse, sprightly but not exaggerated, never missing her points, and singing with perfect method,

THE SCARLET CITY

Miss Cavendish was just the girl-boy, whom Jacques Offenbach would have selected as the legitimate heir to the throne vacated by Hortense Schneider, Grand Duchess of Gerolstein. Every one left the theatre singing or whistling the refrain of her song, 'I'm only a tramp, tramp, tramp,' into which the actress poured so much mingled pathos and humour." And so on for about three-quarters of a column. I cut the notice out, and sent it to my Uncle Theobald at Glen-troughton Rectory. As to the Wicked Uncle, he thawed by degrees, and at last became a constant visitor to our domicile, when Tabby, even after a ferocious quarrel with me, would smile upon me with the innocent radiancy of a bridesmaid. But Tabby's triumph had completely taken her out of my hands. Even the fact that I had written the burlesque came to be forgotten, but it was always remembered that I was "Evie" Cavendish's husband. If we received invitations to luncheon, dinner, or supper, I was perfectly aware that I was bidden as a necessary incubus, and after a while I rarely accompanied Tabby to these feasts, whereat waste of money and food seemed the principal object. I recollect that at one of these extravagant repasts, the host, a young ironmaster, just of age, ordered the most expensive dinner procurable in London—not the best, but "the most expensive," those were his very words when ordering the banquet at a West End hotel. The result was awful, in every sense of the word. One of the dishes consisted of woodcocks, stuffed with truffles and *pâté de foie gras*! I need give no further details of an orgie which made me ill for a week. Sir Percy Spalding never called upon us; but I noticed that he was very often behind the scenes at the Commonwealth, having

cemented a strong friendship with the retired plumber by means of judicious presents of game and invitations to dine at his chambers in Ryder Street. He also generally appeared at the entertainments, to which I have alluded. But in my presence, at all events, he was by no means familiar, when talking to Tabby, and even deferential in his manner. At the same time I knew that he was a member of the Bordeaux set, and that he professed great friendship for the soft-hearted "Pigeon." But I never suspected Tabby of unfaithful conduct, bitterly as I resented her wayward behaviour. Among her intimate acquaintances was a pretty hazel-eyed girl, who played very small parts at the Commonwealth. She looked the incarnation of modesty, always quietly dressed, never boisterous in her demeanour, and perfectly correct in her speech. I never heard her swear or tell a risky story, though she constantly consorted with others less particular in all respects. How Milly Doveton—that was her name—became so friendly with Tabby, I was at a loss to imagine. She lived with her mother, reported to be the widow of a curate, at Brixton. Unlike most of the girls at the Commonwealth, she had no particular admirers—I use the plural, because every self-respecting damsel at Mr Kopfto's playhouse had a string of devotees attached to the skirt of her gown. But Milly Doveton seemed to care for no man, and I think it must have been the girl's quiet manner, which first attracted me to her. She was always very agreeable, and full of bright chat. I liked her very much, and talked to her more than to any member of the Commonwealth Company. Indeed I persuaded Mr Kopfto to make her understudy to Miss Blanche Agincourt, who

played Penelope. Tabby was not the least bit jealous of my attention to Milly Doveton. On the contrary, she seemed to encourage our intimacy, for such it gradually became, and would rally us both as "a couple of spoons," when Milly would blush, and I would tell Tabby not to try and make mischief between friends. I little knew that the soft-spoken Milly was the red-herring drawn across the scent of Tabby's misdeeds, and that with all her prudish affectation, she was about the hottest member of Mrs Bordeaux's pack of female bloodhounds. With what devilish ingenuity the plot for my destruction was laid, I will now detail as briefly as possible.

One Saturday in June Tabby proposed that we should go down to Brighton by the midnight train and stop at some lodgings which we generally used when sojourning at London-Super-Mare. I readily agreed, and also to her proposal that Milly Doveton should accompany us. I had an engagement to dine with Cocky Larkhall, Reggie Gregory, and Anthony Fuller at the Macready Club, so I arranged to meet Tabby and Milly Doveton at Victoria Station. I spent a very jolly evening with my friends, Tony being in his best form. Then it was, I remember—so do little incidents on eventful days stick to one's memory—that he told us about the parrot, which he acquired when a boy, on a voyage from Vera Cruz to New York. It appears that at the Mexican port Tony had bought a parrot of singularly vicious temperament, who not only swore fearfully in Spanish, but absolutely refused to be touched, a bird that ought to have had its neck wrung for profanity and vindictiveness combined. Tony was in despair at his bargain. At Havana, where the steamer touched, there came on board an old Cuban

lady, accompanied by a priest, and also by a pet parrot, the very spit of the feathered demon which Anthony possessed, but a model bird, quiet, docile, and talking nothing but the purest Castilian, interspersed with snatches of ballads and anthems. Directly Anthony saw this talented double of his own spitfire, a larcenous idea possessed him, and I grieve to say that he carried it out. With his hands guarded by thick leather gloves, he substituted, in the dead of night, the virago of Vera Cruz for the gentle biped of Havana, and went to bed without any sort of remorse, looking, doubtless, as Drake did, upon all Spaniards as fair game. In the morning the old lady, attended by her confessor, went as was her wont to the saloon, where her favourite's cage was suspended, and proffered the inmate her morning offering of fruit. To her intense surprise, the parrot addressed her with a volley of oaths. Neither she nor the priest could understand the metamorphosis, but when opening the cage door she attempted to stroke the blasphemous bird, she was rudely reminded that parrots have further power of expressing dislike, for the brute made his beak meet in the donna's fat forefinger. Screaming with pain and fright, the old lady exclaimed, "*Madre de Dios!* Father, what possesses the bird?" "The devil," replied the confessor, crossing himself. "This is what comes, my dear daughter, of travelling in a heretic ship. Your pious darling is undoubtedly bewitched." "What can I do with her?" exclaimed the lady wildly. "She must be destroyed," said the priest, binding up the finger of his patroness. "When once the devil enters into man, beast, or bird, there is no hope but in instant death."

Anthony, who had been watching the scene,

inwardly splitting with laughter, now came forward and supported the remarks of the cleric. "My poor Chiquita," murmured the old lady, "I suppose for your soul's sake there is no other remedy." "None, daughter," observed the priest. "Perhaps this good youth will undertake that the poor demented creature's end shall be painless." "That I will," cried Anthony, as he took down the cage. The old lady wept bitterly, as he carried the parrot off to his cabin, congratulating himself, as he surveyed both parrots, on his adroitness. While he was chuckling to himself, however, he was very startled by feeling a hand laid on his shoulder. It was that of the priest, who, with a benevolent smile on his lips, softly tapped his nose with his forefinger. "My son," he whispered, "halves when we get to New York." Then he disappeared. "And," concluded Anthony with a sigh, "when I sold the birds he got what he wanted. It wasn't an honest deal, perhaps, but there, I wasn't born particular, young fellers."

I reached Victoria only a few minutes before the Brighton train started, and found Milly Doveton standing on the platform before a first-class compartment, in which she had put her bag. My wife was not to be seen.

"Hallo!" I exclaimed, "where's Tabby?"

Milly, with a faint blush, handed me a note. It ran, as far as I can remember, for I tore it up then and there, as follows:—

DEAREST JACK,—Just had a wire to say Auntie is *very ill*. *I must go to her*. But do you take Milly down to Brighton. I'm not afraid to trust you, and I'll follow by the first train in the morning.—Your loving T.

"You know what this is about?" I asked Milly.

"Oh yes, and I'm so sorry," she replied, casting down her eyes.

"Take your seats," cried the guard, running down the platform. Mechanically I threw my Gladstone into the carriage and helped Milly in. Just as the train was starting, a smooth-faced, hook-nosed man thrust his head through the window.

"Are you Mr and Mrs John Franklyn?" he asked.

"No," I said. "I am Mr John Franklyn, but this is Miss Millicent Doveton. Why do you ask?"

"Only because," he replied very civilly, "Mrs Franklyn ordered this parcel should meet her by this train," and he handed in a brown paper package, bearing the address of a well-known firm of milliners. "Perhaps you'll kindly take charge of it, sir, and sign this receipt with the hour, or I might get into trouble."

"Certainly," I answered, and I put my name to the piece of paper which he handed me, just as the train began to move.

"Well, this is a strange adventure," I observed with a laugh. "I wish Mrs Bottlestrap wouldn't fall ill at such inopportune moments."

"That means, I suppose, that you don't like the trouble of escorting me," said Milly Doveton demurely.

"On the contrary, Milly, I'm only too delighted to do so," I cried. "Come, let us make our miserable selves as happy as we can. I've got some chicken sandwiches and champagne in my gripsack. I dare say you're hungry, for you can't have had any supper."

"You're very thoughtful, Mr Franklyn," she said, "I am very hungry. Now you won't be shocked I

know if I change my boots, and put on a pair of shoes. My feet are so tired."

"Not a bit," I said. "Let me unbutton them for you."

I did so, and noticed what a very pretty pair of *brodequins* encased Miss Milly's extremities, and also what extremely fine silk stockings she wore. When she had put on her shoes, she exclaimed piteously: "I can't get the boots into my bag, they take up so much room. What am I to do?"

"Give them to me," I said, "I'll find space for them. My bag's like a woman's conscience, very elastic."

The *brodequins* in a moment were laid to rest in the Gladstone, and then Milly and I enjoyed a hearty supper. She was very amusing in her quiet way, and our not very long journey seemed shorter than I had ever known it, even shorter than when Tabby and I left London for our honeymoon. At Brighton Station I chartered a fly, and as I did so, I thought I saw the milliner's emissary, who had handed me the parcel at Victoria, but of course, I reasoned, that was absurd. The lodgings which we occupied were *en suite* on the first floor—that is to say, facing the sea were three rooms opening into one another, a bedchamber at either end, and a sitting-room in the middle. Behind each bedroom was a small dressing-closet. Milly Doveton, pleading fatigue, retired to rest soon after our arrival. I sat up for an hour or so reading the *Saturday Review*, the while smoking a pipe and drinking a glass of whisky and water. Then I felt sleepy, and also sought my couch, wondering why Milly Doveton could not have put off her visit till the morning. Then I passed into the land of Nod. I was awoke, I

suppose between three and four, by a rapping at the door leading from my bedroom into the sitting-room. I jumped out of bed and unlocked it. "Who's there?" I asked.

"I'm so cold, and can't get to sleep," replied Milly Doveton's voice. "Could you lend me a wrap, Mr Franklyn? I'm so sorry to have disturbed you."

"Here, take my dressing-gown," I said peevishly, not relishing this nocturnal disturbance, and I thrust the wadded silk garment through the door, which I relocked. "That'll keep the chill off. You'll find the spirits on the table if you want a tot."

"Thanks ever so much," said Milly. "If I wasn't half frozen I wouldn't have dared to awake you. Please forgive me."

"Don't mention it," I returned. "Good-night, and may your dreams be happy."

"Ditto," she replied with a shivery laugh. "Good-night!"

I mention all these details because, though they may seem trivial, they were all so many meshes in the web in which I was ultimately entrapped.

I met Milly Doveton at breakfast, and she assured me that she had slept most comfortably after wrapping herself in my dressing-gown. I told her that she had better keep it for the present as I had no earthly use for it. She thanked me very prettily, and then told the maid, who came in with some stewed kidneys, that she would find her boots in my room, and told her to wash the patent leather with milk. After breakfast we went out for a stroll on the front, where we met several theatrical acquaintances, most of whom were disposed to be facetious, when, in reply to their inquiries, I stated that my wife was in London.

THE SCARLET CITY

On returning to the rooms I was surprised and annoyed not only not to find Tabby, but also no communication from her.

"That's nothing," said Milly, "remember it's Sunday. No doubt poor Mrs Bottlestrap's worse."

"Well," I said, "if she doesn't come down to-day, I shall go back to London by the last train. You can do as you like, Milly."

"If you don't mind," she said, "I shall stop here till to-morrow. The sea air does me such a lot of good."

I took her to lunch, and subsequently to dine at the Grand, and finding neither Tabby nor any news of her, I departed for the Metropolis in no very pleasant state of mind, leaving Milly Doveton in possession of the apartments—and my dressing-gown.

I drove straight from Victoria to my Bloomsbury flat. Tabby was not there. I went round to Mrs Bottlestrap's hotel, and to my astonishment found the florid proprietress drinking hot brandy and water, and reading the *Police News* in her private sitting-room.

"What!" I exclaimed, "aren't you dangerously ill?"

Mrs Bottlestrap laughed. "Lord, no, Mr Jack," she replied. "Whatever put that into your head?"

My brain was in a whirl. "Didn't Tabby come to you last night?" I asked excitedly.

"Not she," she cackled. "Since Tabby's become a Prima Donna she ain't got no time to look after her poor old bringer-up."

I rushed from the room without wishing Mrs Bottlestrap farewell, filled with intense rage and sorrow at my wife's duplicity. Once more I sped

up the stairs of our domicile, and having examined the dining and drawing rooms without success, ascended to our bedroom, the door of which I found bolted on the inside. I rapped impatiently.

"What is it?" asked Tabby from inside.

"Open the door!" I answered angrily, "and tell me where you've been?"

"I shan't!" she answered defiantly. "Tell me, you wretch, where *you've* been."

"By God!" I retorted hotly, "if you don't open the door I'll break it open."

"Do if you can," she replied in the same tone as before.

Mad with anger I went into the study, and armed myself with a poker, with which I began to batter in the panels of the door, the while Tabby shrieked "Murder!" at the top of her voice. All through this tragic comedy I had played into the hands of the enemy. I had just burst in the two top panels, when there was a violent ringing at the bell, at which Tabby's screams became worse than ever. The house seemed pandemonium. I rushed downstairs, and was confronted by a policeman with a bull's-eye, which he turned full on to my face.

"What do you want?" I asked fiercely, grasping the poker manacingly.

"There's cries of murder," he replied methodically, "and it's my dooty to inwestigat the same, the more so, as you've a weapon in your 'and."

"Nonsense!" I cried, "come upstairs, and look for yourself. My wife won't let me into my bedroom, and I've been trying to force my way in."

"We'll see to that, with your permission," he observed grimly, and followed me up. When we reached

the bedroom door, I was surprised to find it wide open, the splinters and chips lying all over the floor, and Tabby, in a torn and blood-stained nightdress, lying on the bed.

"Help! help!" she feebly murmured.

"'Ave you any charge to make?" asked the constable, evidently impressed with the evidence of his own eyes. He produced a notebook and pencil.

"None whatever," said Tabby, sitting up. "That man is my husband, and I won't proceed against him, but I call you to witness that I've been most scandalously treated by him in his drunken rage."

"Werry good, ma'am," remarked the constable, making some notes, "if there's anything I can——"

"Get out of my house," I interrupted wrathfully. "I don't understand the meaning of this."

"Nor do I," retorted the policeman. "I finds you with a poker in yer 'and, a lady smothered in rags and blood, and a solid door knocked into wooden matches. But as there's no charge, it's my dooty to go, this bein' yer 'ome." He stumped downstairs and slammed the front door after him, with a concussion, which might have shaken the mummies in the Museum.

"Tabby," I said, "what on earth is the explanation of your conduct?"

She said nothing.

"Can't you answer me?" I inquired as gently as I could.

Again she was silent.

"Look here," I said fiercely, "this is more than I can put up with. I leave this house now and for ever, unless you satisfy me as to your doings."

She was still without reply.

"I'm going to the Tavistock Hotel," I said.

"Go, and be damned to you!" she exclaimed, "I never want to see you again."

Then I called her a name, which I ought not to have done, and banging the disabled door to, after the fashion of the policeman, I picked up my bag and drove to the hostelry in Covent Garden. Thence I speeded to the Ibis, where I was lucky enough to find Anthony tolerably free from looking after the wants of his members. He listened to my story with great attention, and then said—

"Young feller, look out for squalls."

"What do you advise me to do?" I asked.

"Nothing," he replied. "You can't."

"What is the reason of Tabby's conduct?" I cried desperately.

Anthony gave a bitter laugh. "What's the reason of any woman's conduct?" he answered. "She's got better fish to fry, that's all."

"What do you mean? Is it Percy Spalding?" I exclaimed.

"It is and it isn't," he replied, "I can't say more. But have you ever noticed a long, prickly-peared loon called Benjamin Barbecue hanging about the Commonwealth?"

"Benjamin Barbecue," I repeated. "That chap with no end of money, who's a friend of 'Pigeon' Bordeaux?"

"The very same," retorted Anthony calmly.

"Well," I said hotly, "what of him?"

"Only this," answered Anthony, "he wants to marry Tabby."

"Marry Tabby!" I shouted. "Are you mad, Anthony Fuller?"

"Not a bit of it," he said, as quietly as before. "That's her game."

"Good God!" I cried, "but she can't. She's my wife!"

"She won't be very soon, unless I'm much mistaken," returned Anthony. "She means to divorce you, and then Barbecue will marry her."

"What am I to do?" I muttered, stunned by the opinion of Anthony.

"Let him!" replied Tony philosophically. "It's the best thing for you, young feller. You've been bought and sold, like many a better man. Mark my words, you'll be served to-morrow or next day with a citation for divorce."

Anthony was perfectly right. I got stupidly drunk that morning, and when I returned to the Tavistock I was put to bed by the porter of the hotel. When late in the afternoon, feeling wretched and ill, I crawled to the entrance hall, I was served with a formidable-looking document. It was the petition of Tabitha Mary Franklyn, born Bottlestrap, for divorce, by reason of the adultery and cruelty of John MacWashington Franklyn. I took it up to Anthony.

"I thought so," he observed, "don't defend the action."

"But I'm innocent," I exclaimed indignantly.

"All the more reason why you shouldn't," he said. "You've not got a leg to stand upon. You might get off with a judicial separation, but what's the good of that? If this was a civilised country, divorces would be amicably arranged without any preliminary nonsense. Tabby doesn't care about you, Jack. Don't pretend to care about her."

I may state that, after much hesitation, I took Anthony's advice, and that, on the evidence of the milliner's *employé*, a private detective, Milly Doveton, my dressing-gown, her boots, the landlady at Brighton, ~~the policeman~~, and our servant, who had overheard the episode of the broken door, I was convicted by a jury, and sentenced by an impartial judge to dissolve partnership from the prima donna of the Commonwealth. But probably the judge would not have been so severe in his remarks, had he known that one evening, pending proceedings, I tracked Tabby to Sir Percy Spalding's chambers in Ryder Street, that I waited till the baronet came out in the early morning, and gave him as sound a hiding, as ever one man administered to another, and that Tabby's solicitors, being well aware of the encounter, not only declined to accept alimony, but begged me not to defend the action; in which I acquiesced. This may read like fiction; it is Gospel Truth. In six months' time, that astute personage, the Queen's Proctor, not intervening, Tabby and I became two, and Mr Benjamin Barbecue, to the great delight of Mrs Bordeaux and her friends, was united to her for whom I had no shred of affection left. If I had, it would have been entirely dispelled by a note which I received from Mrs Bottlestrap.

DEAR M^r JACK,—Don't be angry with me about Tabby. It isn't my fault, but after all, Heaven's decrees is the best. I have always feared to tell you who was Tabby's real Pa. It wasn't poor Bottlestrap, but one that you knew well, Cornelius O'Flaherty, a black-hearted villain gone to his rest.—Yours
obtly, MARTHA BOTTLESTRAP.

P.S.—But Tabby was born in wedlock, I've that to my credit.

So this was Tabby's secret! She did well to hide it as long as she could! Only the Wicked Uncle, for some occult reason, looked upon her as an injured person, but he was always Quixotic, when the fair sex was in fault.

CHAPTER *I SAIL FOR SOUTH AFRICA,*
 THIRTY- *BUT DO NOT GET THERE.*
 NINTH *THE RESURRECTION OF*
GEORGE

THE disruption of my household left me in very depressed mood. The perfidy of Tabby, and Millý Doveton, raised in me a positive repugnance to the stage and all connected therewith, and greatly to the annoyance of Mr Kopfto, I abruptly terminated the playing of *Undaunted Ulysses* at the Commonwealth. He begged me not to stop the piece, then he threatened me with an action for damages, for the burlesque was drawing all the town, but he was defeated by his own astuteness, for he had insisted on the insertion of a clause in our agreement, to the effect that the run of the piece could be ended by a week's notice on either side. Mr Kopfto had taken this precaution on his own account, but, as matters turned, it proved to my advantage, if it be an advantage to sacrifice money, to sentiment, or, as some might not unjustly have termed it, spite. But the Extravaganza was so associated with Tabby and her traitorous ally, that I resolved that their names and mine should no longer appear on the same play-bill. Anthony told me that I was an ass, and so, no doubt, I was, from a matter-of-fact point of view, but the iron had eaten

into my soul, and I would rather have broken stones than have continued my connection with the stage.

So I abandoned the footlights, and paid greater attention to journalistic work, to the great dismay of Mr Joskins, the music-monger, who, having bought the publishing rights of *Undaunted Ulysses* from Mr Tobit and myself, declared that I had acted in a manner calculated to place him within measurable distance of Basinghall Street. I felt the force of his argument, and again (according to Anthony Fuller), acting in an asinine way, I proposed to assign to him all my acting rights in the piece, outside of London. Mr Joskins accepted the offer, and behaved, as he never failed to do, with the greatest liberality, for he insisted upon handing me a cheque for £500. "I shall get it all back," he observed, when I protested against his munificence, "and more to boot." And so he did, for he sold the American and Australian rights to a speculator for £1500 on the following day. Mr Joskins thoroughly deserved the profit, for, rough diamond though he seemed, he was a real gem, and infinitely superior to the sham jewels which nowadays pass muster for Kohinoors.

At this period of my life I had, at one time, serious thoughts of becoming a Roman Catholic and joining a monastic order, and at another I fairly startled Anthony Fuller with my dissipated habits. I did not care what became of my body; as to my soul, I had no belief in its existence. The articles which I wrote teemed with covert sneers at Christianity, so much so, that I received an intimation from more than one editor that I must amend my style, or my

contributions would be rejected. This may seem incongruous with my fits of devotion to the Deity, but so it was. I think that when Anthony declared me to be ripe for Colney Hatch, he was not libelling me, but speaking the exact truth.

My salvation was wrought in a way which I could never have imagined, when the agency be considered. In a devil-may-care frame of mind I was one afternoon strolling down Fleet Street, with some copy in my pocket, when I encountered Mr Horace Hall, the gifted "special" of the *Daily Argus*. Since our first meeting at Cowes, I had often run across him, and had had many a pleasant chat, so we were on familiar terms.

"Hallo! Jack," he exclaimed. "What are you doing now?"

"The same old game," I replied, "trying to grind grist enough to make bread. I wish I could get a job which would take me away from this infernal London."

"By Jupiter!" he exclaimed, "an idea strikes me. Stand me a drink at the Cheese, and I will expound my meaning."

In the low-ceilinged haunt of Dr Johnson, Mr Horace Hall explained himself. "It's in this way," he said, as we seated ourselves in the only old-fashioned snugery left in London. "Our people want some one to go out to South Africa and report upon the diamond mines, and they don't know whom to send. They're a bit short on the staff. I'd like to go myself, but the boss won't hear of it. I suppose he thinks my 'exes' would tot up," he added, with a saucy smile. "Now, you'd be just the man."

"But," I said, "I don't know your manager, and I've never been to South Africa."

"That's where you have a great advantage," he observed, filling his glass for the third time; "if you knew our manager he'd never send you, and ~~if~~ you knew South Africa you'd never go, but, as you don't, why not apply for the mission? I'll give you a line of introduction if you think it's worth your while."

I thanked him sincerely, and a quarter of an hour later was ushered into the sanctum of Mr Loftus, the "boss" of the *Argus*. Mr Loftus was a tall, middle-aged man, who wore spectacles, apparently with the sole object of looking over the glasses. He had inquiring eyes, which pierced your own like a corkscrew, and extracted the bung of your reflections, before you were well aware of his intention. As I had told Horace Hall, I did not know him, but Mr Loftus knew me, I conclude on the tomfool principle, with much exactness. He listened to what I had to say, made a note or two, and then observed, "I think your grandfather, Lord MacWashington, the great diplomatist, was at one period of his career Governor of the Cape of Good Hope." I replied in the affirmative, wondering how he could possibly have remembered so remote a fact. When I came to know Mr Loftus better, I found out that he remembered everything and forgot nothing. He never wrote a line for the *Argus*, but he superintended every department of the paper with the zeal of a patriotic prime minister. Had Mr Loftus taken up politics instead of newspapers, he would undoubtedly have become a bulwark of the Constitution, but I doubt if he would have wielded such autocratic power. He dismissed me, saying that I should hear from him in twenty-four

hours, and in the meantime he would consult the proprietors. I left him, with the impression that he was favourably disposed to my candidature, and this was confirmed by Hall, who had remained at the Cheshire Cheese.

"Depend upon it, you've got a chance," said the good-natured "special"; "if Loftus had said he'd write to you in a week, I should say you hadn't a ghost of a chance, but when he named a limit of twenty-four hours, he meant something. You can stand another whiskey, in which to drink the health of your grandfather. His having been Governor of the Cape will stand you in good stead, if I'm not mistaken."

Horace Hall's prophecy proved correct. I was engaged by the *Daily Argus* to proceed to Kimberley and write, from the point of view of an English outsider, a full and faithful account of the working of the mines, at a very liberal salary. I never felt happier in my life, for I was now enabled to leave my cares behind me, and when Cocky Larkhall, Reggie Gregory, Anthony Fuller, and last, but not least, the Wicked Uncle, came to see me off at Southampton, where I embarked on board of the good ship *Bladensburg*, there was not a man with whom I would have exchanged places. A great weight was lifted from me, and I resolved that I would make a new name for myself in a new land. Anthony's last words were, "All's for the best, young feller, all's for the best, but don't forget Tony," and as he spoke I saw, for the first time since I had known him, that his eyes were moist with tears. So, indeed, were mine.

We had a rough time of it down Channel, and

through the Bay of Biscay. It was about the fourth day out before the majority of the passengers ventured on deck. Being a good sailor myself, I had not stowed myself below, and now that the sun was shining and the waves dancing merrily, I was glad to see so many of my fellow travellers able to join the general circle. They were a mixed crowd of both sexes, men, women, and children.

I was talking with a merchant bound for the Transvaal, when my gaze lighted on a lady, whose maid was arranging her deck-chair. Her back was turned towards me, but I felt sure that I knew the figure. I quivered as I thought this, and when the lady turned her face, as she sat down, I was for the moment paralysed, for she was none other than my late, but not lamented, wife, Tabby! I rushed down to the saloon, and examined the list of passengers. Yes! there was the name of Miss Evelyn Cavendish. This was indeed fatality! But where was Mr Benjamin Barbecue? His name did not appear. I resolved to interview the maid, but on second thoughts I placed my inquiries, together with a couple of sovereigns, in the hands of one of the stewards. He reported to me that Miss Cavendish was going to star in Cape Colony and the Transvaal, that she had had a quarrel with her husband (less than two years before, I occupied that proud position) on account of some baronet, Sir Percival Something, and had broken her engagement at the Commonwealth Theatre. "Come away quite suddenly," said the steward, "but made no secret of her flight, sir. Fine woman, but, so the maid says, very 'aughty, but I daresay the young woman could interdoose you if you felt so disposed." I forget what I answered, but

I know it was nothing very polite, by the blank look on the man's face as I turned away. He got me an introduction indeed!

For the next three days I constantly met Tabby, but she took no notice of me, nor I of her. We might have been perfect strangers. On the eighth day out we passed into a dense and hot white mist, so thick that the top of the funnels were invisible from the deck, and in this stifling atmosphere we proceeded at half speed, feeling our way like a blind man crossing a street. Suddenly there was a terrible crash, followed by shouts, screams, and the roaring of steam. Evidently we had run into some vessel, or some vessel had run into us. The voice of the captain could be heard, giving orders with great calmness, but it was well-nigh drowned by the uproar which spread over the ship, and the terror was rendered doubly awful by our inability to see through the persistent vapour. I was standing on the starboard side, close by an overhanging boat, when the collision occurred, and only saved myself from falling by clutching hold of the davits. All around me were frantic phantoms rushing to and fro, calling to one another and yelling for help. A man threw something into the boat—I discovered afterwards it was a beaker of water—and another man a small quantity of other provisions. Both rushed away as they did so. I felt that the ship was settling down under my feet. It was the most appalling sensation I had ever experienced. I leapt into the boat, and was beginning to cut her away with my knife from the davits, when a woman sank on the deck before me. I jumped out of the boat, picked her up, heavy though she was, and threw her into the gig—for such it was—and hacked away at the ropes. The boat fell not many feet on

to the water, and I looked for the oars. There were none! The woman was lying just where I had thrown her. I expected that my last minute had come, for I felt sure that we should be sucked down with the sinking steamer, from which the shrieks and yells were more blood-curdling than ever. The boat glided down by the screw, which in the dim air I could see revolving like a demented star, as the ill-fated *Bladensburg* went slowly down, head foremost. I imagine that it was the screw, which saved the lives of the woman and myself, for, as the vessel disappeared, we were driven far from her by some invisible force, which shook our frail craft till she rocked nearly gunwale under. Then the woman lifted herself from the bottom boards on which she had been lying. Through the milky fog I recognised her, as she recognised me. It was Tabby! We neither of us spoke, as the boat drifted slowly over the sullen swell of the ocean. There was not a ripple to disturb the constant swaying to and fro of the great leaden sea, and there was no sun to be seen. The thick, white, and hot haze hung round about, veiling the outlook on all sides. I said to Tabby: "There is nothing to be done. I can't row without oars or sculls, nor can we sail."

She looked at me with an expression of disgust. "You were always a fool, John Franklyn," she said. "Any other man would have thought of these things."

I answered, "It wasn't my fault. I only thought of saving our lives."

"Saving our lives!" she echoed scornfully. "You mean torturing me to death."

"That's not fair, Tabby," I retorted, "I did my

best. If I hadn't cut the ropes, we should have been sucked under when the ship sank."

"And a good job too," she cried. "What's the use of living, when one ought to be dead?"

"God knows," I cried, feeling terribly depressed, "that I meant well by you. I could have escaped in the cutter or the long-boat if I hadn't found you."

"Why should you have cared about me?" she sneered. "A divorced wife isn't much of a catch to her former husband. This beastly mist is ten times as bad, as the worst London fog. I suppose you think that I enjoy being boiled alive. I'm so thirsty, that I don't know whether my tongue's my own."

I produced the beaker of water. "Look here, Tabby," I said, "this is all the water we have, and we must be sparing of it, for I can't tell what may happen."

"All right," she answered pettishly. "I don't want to hear any sermons. Haven't you got any brandy or whisky?"

"Here's some rum," I answered, holding up a bottle.

"Rum," cried Tabby; "that I haven't tasted for years. Give me some with a drop of water."

I filled the tin pannikin with a draught, which she drank eagerly

"That's made me feel better," she exclaimed, "but wouldr Percy or Clacky laugh to see me in this sort of state, and with *you* as my companion." She laughed to herself shrilly, and the sound of her voice seemed to cut the dense atmosphere like a sword cleaving hot water. The drink unloosed her tongue. "John Franklyn," she said, while the boat went onward through the frowzy sea-clouds, "I loved

you once. I think perhaps that you cared for me, but now, if there be any pleasure in life left, it is the fact that it was I who divorced you—remember you didn't divorce me—and I am probably going to see you die. Perhaps I shall die too, but remember that you will die first—I am sure that you will. You needn't start with horror. I shan't try and make you do so, but you will all the same. Lord! what a fool you've been, John Franklyn, when I come to think of it. You knew what I was, and yet I gulled the grandson of the greatest diplomatist in Europe, to choose for a wife the daughter of a scoundrel, and a—well, my mother——”

I was writhing with pain of mind, but I said nothing. The great white cloak wrapped us round closer than before, and the swell lifted and sank with the regularity of a sea-saw. Tabby continued with half-closed eyes.

“I said that I loved you once, but that was before we were married. When I knew you as the simple school-boy I loved you best, because I was the first, you understand; but when I got you to make me your wife, I hated you, for I had not forgotten, nor have I now, your brutal insults to me in the Albany. You have always been really in love with that sandy-haired——”

“Stop!” I cried, “for God's sake, spare her!”

Tabby smiled curiously. “Good!” she exclaimed. “You love her now, even when we are sailing on that great gulf stream which nobody has recrossed. I won't mention her name, because you might brain me with that stretcher which you have just picked up. But you know the girl I mean, especially, when I tell you that the paragraph announcing her engagement

never appeared in the *Morning Post*. You needn't start! I had that printed, also one, which I sent to her, announcing your engagement to me. Pretty, wasn't it?"

I groaned aloud.

Tabby continued: "She wouldn't talk to you now as I am talking. She would be fainting on your manly breast, and calling on God Almighty, while I am practically bidding you go to the devil. I don't think, John Franklyn, that there's any corresponding porter, to St Peter in heaven, at the gates of hell. The devil is only too glad to welcome all customers. His motto is, 'Walk in, and I'll look after you.' He's a very worthy fellow is Satan. He introduced me to Percy Spalding, and Clacky, and Pigstock, and Rippingstone, and Gorgeyhass, and Biggy Biggleswade, and—— Great Scott! what's the use of totting up the list of my lovers. Some came before I was married, some while I was engaged, and a good many others afterwards, even after I divorced you and married that fool, Ben Barbecue, who is probably breaking his heart for me in England. Does that statement make your noddle-hearted self feel what a simpleton you've been?"

I thought that her condition had affected her brain, and answered: "No, Tabby, I have done what I have done."

"But you regret it?" she cried eagerly, her eyes flashing through the thick white mist. "Oh! I know you must regret it!"

"How can I regret a past which never caused me to fear the future?" I asked evasively.

She looked at me, with disappointment plainly visible in her glance. Then she cried: "If you only

knew how I hate you, you would pray God to forgive my hatred." And then she added: "Give me another drink!" She flung the pannikin at me. I filled it as before, and handed it to her. She drained it, and wrapping her cloak round her subsided into silence, the while the dense vapour became thicker and thicker, and the boat, but for the constant motion of the swell, might have been floating on a sea of oil.

As to myself, I plunged into a vague reverie, in which all the events of my life passed through my brain with the vividness of a panoramic photograph. I recalled Aunt Penelope, George, Uncle Philip, Mrs Sharraton, Flaherty, Reggie Gregory, Charlie Larkhall, Anthony Fuller, and, above all, Beatrice Belleisle. Every scene, the rescue at Monkey Island, the attack on the Granite Sea, and the struggle on the cliff at Rosherville, was recalled to me with perfect minuteness. Even little matters, such as the colour of Tony's hat ribbon on the river, and the pattern of Flaherty's trousers on the two occasions, when we met, were brought back to me, along with the more broadly painted figures of my life's drama. My thoughts formed a succession of waking dreams, perfect in detail, pitiless in their naked truth. The night began to fall, but the great white shroud grew thicker and thicker, as the boat drifted and drifted, while I sat thinking and thinking. Presently, after many hours I think it must have been, I was aroused by the voice of Tabby.

"Give me something to drink," she said.

I struck a wax match, and filling the pannikin with rum and water, handed it to her. I could feel that the little beaker was getting perilously light. As before, she flung the pannikin at me, and I suppose

went off into a doze again. And then I must have slumbered too, for I dreamed a dream, which was real enough indeed, but so palpably impossible to me when I awoke with a start, that I knew it must be the outcome of my disordered imagination. It seemed to me that I was once more back at the Duchess's ball in Carlton House Terrace, and that Beatrice was handing me a glass of wine, when suddenly she dashed it to the floor, crying: "She shall not poison you, Jack, she shall not poison you. I will save you!" My Lady of the Coral Hand appeared transformed into an avenging angel, her blue eyes filled with the anger of righteousness, her form quivering with emotion. With a loud cry, I rose to speak to her when I came to myself in broad daylight, with the steaming shroud of the sea still hanging heavily over my vision.

Tabby was awakened by my shout. "What is it?" she exclaimed drowsily. "O God!" she cried, "still in this cursed boat with *you*! Give me a drink!"

I obeyed as before, but as I handed her the pannikin, I said: "Tabby, I don't think that there can be more than a quart of water left, and the rum is nearly gone."

"I don't care," she answered angrily, "let us drink and be merry, for we're certain to die."

For the third time she hurled the tin vessel towards me. Had I not managed to catch it, the pannikin would have fallen into the sea.

"I am beastly hungry," she added, wiping her mouth with the corner of the cloak. "I suppose that you put some *paté de foie gras* and *galantine* into your pockets before we left that horrible ship?" She spoke as

THE SCARLET CITY

calmly, as if these luxuries were the right kind of provisions to produce.

"No," I answered, "but here are three ship's biscuits."

She looked at them doubtfully and disdainfully, sighed deeply, and ate them all. When she had finished she exclaimed—

"I must have more to drink."

"Tabby," I said, "please remember that our stock is very nearly done."

"What of that?" she cried. "If it hadn't been for you, I should have been in one of the other boats, no doubt having what I wanted. Give me a drink at once."

Again I filled the pannikin, for I felt that it was no use my husbanding our resources in face of her absolute will. The Shadow of Death had made her reckless, as it had caused me to be completely passive. So I did as she bade me. The tin mug again fell with a clatter at my feet.

"Now, John Franklyn," said Tabby, "fill that with sea-water. I must wash myself. If I've got to be a corpse, I'd like to be a clean one. Turn round and see if you can see a vessel through this damned fog, while I make my toilette."

I filled the pannikin, which she took without a shake of the hand though the tremor of my own muscles made the water dance.

"We'll be drinking this soon, I suppose," she cried with a cynical laugh. "Well, all the better. I've read that sea-water drives people mad, and lunatics not being responsible for their actions, I conclude that you and I will come to blows, and then," she shrugged her shoulders, "it will be a question of the survival of

the fittest, or, I suppose, as you would say in one of your stupid burlesques, the survival of the fighter."

Her equanimity depressed me infinitely more than did her previous burst of passion. As my eyes vainly endeavoured to pierce the sudoriferous mist, I marvelled at the extraordinary temperament of the woman who had been my wife. While she was performing her ablutions in the bow of the boat, I was dipping my hat into the sea, and pouring the water over my head and chest. This considerably refreshed me, and I felt hungry; but the only food which we had left were four biscuits, and a piece of salt beef. Evidently Tabby's appetite was also aroused, despite her recent meal.

"Give me something to eat," she cried. I produced the beef, which I placed before her, together with three of the biscuits, while I fell to on the fourth. She devoured all the meat without offering me a morsel, and also the biscuits. While we were eating, a wondrous change came about. As if by magic the white mist was swept away, the ocean rippled, and a strong fresh breeze blew, I concluded, from the north, striking the boat on the counter, and nearly causing her to heel over, but the cruel sun was now exposed in all its deadly might, and struck down full on our heads, as we sped swiftly over the sapphire waves.

"O heaven!" moaned Tabby, "after being boiled, we are now going to be roasted. I must have more to drink."

"Tabby," I said, "do be reasonable. Look here, there is all the water we have left. Feel how awfully light the beaker is, and think of what will happen if we don't try and spare it."

She took the little barrel in her hands. "Pooh!"

she exclaimed, "give me the rest of the rum, and the pannikin."

"No," I said, "I won't. You've had too much already."

I made a movement forward, to wrest the beaker from her.

"You selfish skunk!" she cried, rising to her feet. "So you want me to die before you, but I won't."

She raised the beaker on high. I saw her swiftly lower her arms, with all her force, and then I remember no more till I feebly opened my eyes in an unfamiliar cabin. I gasped, "Where am I?"

A bronzed and bearded man, sitting by my berth, exclaimed: "What, come to yourself at last! Thank God!"

I blinked and stared at the bearded man. I knew his voice, and seemed to know his face.

"Who are you?" I asked, all dazed.

"Here, drink this," he answered, holding a cup of strong, but cold soup to my lips. Somehow I managed to swallow it, and I felt that I had come again into the living world.

I looked at the bearded man, and again I asked. "Who are you?"

"George," he whispered, bending down and kissing my forehead. "Your brother George."

"George?" I muttered bewildered, "George is dead. Am I in heaven?"

"Not quite," he laughed, "and George isn't dead. I won't explain why not now. You're not strong enough to answer any questions."

I stared at him for a second, and then, throwing my arms round his neck, burst into a torrent of hysterical weeping.

"George! George!" I cried, when I could speak. "God is very merciful to us poor sinners."

"He is indeed," he answered gravely; "but you mustn't talk, Jack. I must go and fetch the doctor." He rose to leave the cabin.

"One moment, George," I said; "was there any one in the boat with me, when you picked her up?"

"Oh yes," he answered, "a woman, an actress, Miss Somebody Cavendish, going out to the Cape. Didn't know your name, but said you had tried to commit suicide, after drinking all the rum and water, which was left. A capital sort, I should say, judging by the way she nursed you, till we chanced across you. But no more talking, Jack, or I shall get into trouble with the medico."

"George, one more word," I urged; "what is the name of this vessel?"

"Her Majesty's ship *Waterloo*," he answered, "homeward bound. Now, try and go to sleep." Then, with a cheery smile and a wave of his hand, my new-found brother left me alone. His recommendation to go to sleep was absolutely impossible to follow. Enfeebled as I was, I tried to put the pieces of the puzzle together in my mind. The reappearance of George was a great and good event, for which I thanked my Creator, for George was very dear to me. I longed to know how his life had been spared, when he was captured by the slavers. That he should not recognise Tabby I was not surprised, for he had not seen her since he was a boy, but that she knew him I was perfectly certain. Then I shuddered as I recalled the two days in the boat, and the catastrophe of the beaker, when Tabby felled me. How long had I been insensible? Where were we now? Why

had Tabby denied me? Trying to satisfy myself on these points, I got drowsier and drowsier, and at last passed again into oblivion. When I came to myself again, George was standing by my side, accompanied by a fresh-coloured, black-whiskered little man in uniform, whom I presently knew as Dr Barford, the ship's surgeon.

"Well, Mr Franklyn," he said, after feeling my pulse, testing my temperature, and making those researches into the condition of my system, which are usual in such cases, "I think I may say that you'll do, but you must have plenty of stimulant. Not globules and lemonade, but good wine, turtle soup—we picked up some turtles at Ascension—and strong jellies, but no solids just at present. That was a nasty knock on the head you got, when you fell down insensible. Follow my advice, and I'll guarantee to land you on the highway to recovery, when we reach Plymouth."

"Where are we now?" I asked.

"We ought to make Funchal to-morrow," he replied. "We've instructions to touch at Madeira for possible orders, and for your sake I'm glad, for we'll get a supply of fruit for you. Now, I'll leave you two brothers together, but mind, not too much chit-chat. I'll send the steward round with a basin of turtle. Chin-chin."

Then George told me how his life had been miraculously spared. He had been knocked down in the scuffle on the beach, and carried inland by the Arabs, most of whom were desirous of cutting off his head without more ado, but the man—his name was Ben Ismet—who had felled him, claimed George as his prize. He pointed out that my brother was

an exceedingly well-built young fellow, and therefore a valuable slave. He had no objection to throat-cutting, but he was not prepared to let others indulge in it at his expense. If they liked to buy George from him for three hundred silver dollars, they were welcome to do what they liked with him. "You may imagine how I felt," said George, "while this conversation was going on. I understand their lingo pretty well. Of course, I knew that, by their laws, any prisoner belonged to the captain, and not to the community. When the rascals heard Ben Ismet's decision, there was a tremendous palaver, and presently there was some animated bidding for my poor carcass, but I felt, after hearing Ben Ismet's eulogies of my value, that not one of them would have taken my life, for an Arab is as artful as a Jew, Levantine, and Maltese rolled into one." Finally, no one reached the reserve price, and Ben Ismet kept his captive. The first thing he did was to strip George of his uniform, linen, boots, arms, and the contents of his pockets, giving him a filthy old cotton jacket, a ragged pair of drawers, and a disreputable tarboosh, wherewithal to preserve some semblance of decency. That very evening the whole party were carried off by a dhow, which had evidently been lurking in the neighbourhood, and taken to a little port in the state of Oman, near the entrance to the Persian Gulf. Ben Ismet conveyed George inland to the mountain slopes west of Sohar, where he had a country house, and having loosely fettered his legs, he set my unfortunate brother to work in the fields.

For over three years George endured this wretched existence, under the burning sun of the Tropic of

Capricorn, which speedily tanned him brown as a roasted coffee-bean. He had no adventures—his life was one long blank, and his only recreation consisted in netting, of which he had always been very fond. But, as will be seen, he had also, being a careful man, looked ahead.

When Ben Ismet saw that he was an adept with the needle, he took him out of the fields and set him up in a small workshop, where, at least, he had not to consort with the degraded beings who formed the rest of the slave-gang. Ben Ismet always took care that his serfs were well fed after his own ideas, for he wisely observed that meals make muscles, and muscles make money. Poor George had no chance of escaping, and he had quite despaired of ever seeing England again, when one day his master came to him and said: "Those infidel dogs, your countrymen, not content with robbing us at sea, have now determined to land armed men and demolish our port. How can we prevent them? Our buildings are but stone and mud, and their cannon-devils knock them to pieces in the twinkling of an eye. How would you advise, Georgios? Speak, whelp of Satan!"

George felt a gleam of hope in his heart. "King of masters," he replied, "there is but one way of stopping these sea-wolves, and that is to send an envoy to their chief and claim his clemency."

"That seems good, but whom can we send?" he exclaimed. "By Allah! I have it—you shall go. Dog will not eat dog, but then," he added reflectively, "you would not come back, and I should lose your value. No, I will go myself, and you shall write the letter, telling how innocent and peaceful are our ways. Write that letter, Georgios, in your own

tongue, and render it into mine. By the beard of the Prophet, if you deceive me, I will have you disembowelled!" •

When George had got to this point, the turtle-soup arrived, and my brother left me to get his own dinner, promising to return anon. I turned over in my bunk, marvelling at the great justice of Providence, and so fell asleep in perfect peace.

CHAPTER
FORTIETH

*THE END OF GEORGE'S
ADVENTURES AND OF
THIS BOOK*

ACCORDING to his promise, George came back some hours later and continued his narrative—
“I wrote the letter in English, as Ben Ismet desired. I said:—

SIR,—I am desired by the bearer, the great Sheik Ben Ismet, surnamed the Omnipotent, to beg you not to disturb his peaceful settlement. He is the biggest thief unhanged, and I am an unfortunate naval officer taken prisoner by the Arabs on the East Coast. Kindly accede to all his demands, and hold him as hostage if you see your way to getting me away. Trusting to God that you will.—I am yours in tribulation,

GEORGE ERNEST FRANKLYN, R.N.

“But I also wrote the letter in Greek characters, a dodge, by which I had read, in a history of India, that Eldred Pottinger managed to get his despatches through the enemy's lines, when defending Herat. Ben Ismet looked at my epistle very suspiciously, and told me to translate it into his own lingo. I did so, but you may be sure it was not a literal rendering. On the contrary, as I read it, the letter was the most flattering encomium of my master's merits. It was lucky that I used Greek letters, because, before taking it, Ben Ismet submitted it to his Hakim, or family doctor, who knew a certain amount of English from

his former acquaintance with Aden, where he had been a shop boy. Master Hakim, who could not make head or tail of what I had written, but was unwilling to reveal his ignorance, declared that it was a missive of the most complimentary and persuasive character, and would not fail to prevent the sea-dogs from desecrating the sacred soil of Oman. Ben Ismet, well satisfied with this assurance, left for the Coast, giving the strictest commands that I was to be kept under lock and key until his return. I assure you that I didn't pass a very merry time, for the next twelve hours. However, I felt that if I had my throat cut it would relieve me of a good deal of anxiety, and that was some sort of consolation. You may imagine my joy when, late on the following day, one of Ben Ismet's head men returned with an order from his master to send me down to the coast without delay, as the English commander wished to employ me as an interpreter. I knew what this meant. The shackles were knocked off my ankles, and, greatly to the surprise of the Hakim, I was given a mule to ride. Early the next morning I was on board H.M.S. *Teredo*, where I found Ben Ismet in a very depressed state, for Captain Pipes, the worthy commander, had gripped the situation at a glance. I was thankful I had read that yarn about Greek characters, and also that I knew how to write them. Ben ismet, when he saw that the game was up, begged me to make the best terms I could for him. This I did readily, for though he was a bloodthirsty rascal, he had been the means of sparing my life, and had not ill-treated me during my long servitude. Finally, terms of peace were arranged on a basis, whereby the fortifications of the port were blown

up; 'all those slaves of Ben Ismet's, who declared themselves to be British subjects, were released—they all did by the way—and the community was fined about £2000. The *Teredo* took me to Port Elizabeth and then to Cape Town, where I found the *Waterloo*, and her skipper kindly offered me a passage to England. That's not quite all, old chap," added George, with a twinkle in his eyes, which would not have been disowned by Anthony Fuller.

He produced a little canvar bag from his pocket, and, opening it, poured some glittering stones on the coverlet of my bunk.

"Do you know what those sparklers are, Jack?" he cried joyously.

"They look like diamonds," I said, fingering them feebly.

"They are diamonds, and also rubies," he retorted, laughing. "I ought perhaps to have told my excellent master, Ben Ismet, before bidding him adieu, that during my promotion of horticulture, I also discovered the hole in which he was wont to bury his gems. I might have added, that one by one, when he was away, I selected some of the finest for future emergencies, though it seemed a thousand to nothing that I should ever be able to turn them to account. It was fair 'doos' as we say. And there they are, Jack—our fortune."

"*Our* fortune!" I echoed vaguely.

"Yes," replied George cheerily. "Yours and mine. If you'd got the crystals, I'd say 'halves,' but as I've got them, I still say 'halves.'"

I feebly protested.

"Bosh!" cried George. "Are you my long-lost

brother, or are you not? And, Jack, old man, these things must be worth over £300,000, so I wasn't taken into captivity for nothing. But there, my adventures are nothing to the finding of you and that good-looking woman drifting about like two barnacles on a log. By Christopher! Jack, if you were the hero of a novel, you ought to marry her!"

His pleasantry, knowing all I did, made me shudder.

"Perhaps she's married already," I murmured faintly.

"Ah!" he said, "I never thought of that. But, seriously, I don't think I should care much about having her for a wife."

"Nor I either, George," I responded heartily. "Is she going back with us to England?"

"No," he replied, "she's begged the Captain to put her ashore at Madeira. She'll surely come and bid you good-bye, old chap."

But Tabby did not, nor did I ever see her again for many a long year, though, soon after the recovery of my health and my return to London, I saw Mr Benjamin Barbecue escorting Miss Milly Doveton into a fashionable (that is, Bohemian-fashionable) restaurant in the Strand. I suppose that his wife was still abroad.

I may here state, that I resolved not to start again for South Africa. I wrote a graphic account, taken down by a shorthand writer, and "typed," of the sinking of the *Bladensburg*, for the *Daily Argus*, but I am sure that it did not attract much general attention, the public mind being mainly occupied by a discussion in the columns of that go-ahead

journal, on the subject of "*Whether women should wear top-boots in the hunting-field?*"

One fact was the most curious of all the many episodes with which I was associated, and that was, that Beatrice Belleisle, my Lady of the Coral Hand, had, after all, wedded Prince Emilio Cassarabia. Long afterwards, I discovered that, while I had been deceived by the false cutting from the *Morning Post*, she had been brutally apprised of my ill-starred nuptials, by marked copies of such "professional" journals, as registered the event. But I could not understand how the false paragraph had been worked with such a substratum of truth.

"If you were to get Percy Spalding or Clacton to confess, you'd probably be near the core of the apple," observed Anthony Fuller, when I put the case before him; "but, Lord bless you, young feller, a woman like Tabby is as artful as a Pantechnicon-van full of chimpanzees. Cheer up, Jack!"

But it was a very long time before I followed his advice. Thanks to George, who insisted on dividing his spoil, which realised more than he had originally valued it at, I was now well off—I might even say rich—but the light seemed to have faded from my life, and I really think that one of my most refreshing days was when—I being then more or less restored to strength—George and I went down to the old-time, yew-shaded churchyard, where our parents had been laid to rest among forefathers, foremothers, and forebears. I am glad to say that neither of us was ashamed to kneel and pray on the grassy graves of our parents. We set up no gorgeous monument to their memory, for we Franklynys, like the Dukes of Devonshire at Chatsworth,

believe that earth must to earth. They sprang from the soil, they mingle with it again.

I bought back the old family property, and George, who retired from the navy with the rank of Commander and the halo of a Nine-Days' Phenomenon, and I live at the house together, always on the understanding, according to his generous way of putting it, that he will shift his hammock, when I am married. We often take up our quarters in the Ebury Street rooms, and both there, and in the country, our constant visitors have been Anthony Fuller, the Wicked Uncle (not quite his former self), Reggie Gregory, the One and Only Major, and Charlie Larkhall, whose constancy to Princess Pauline Rabanoff is about to be rewarded in June. He richly deserves his good luck. Even Count Kromesky and "Jerry" Carmichael (now Sir Gerald Carmichael, K.C.M.G., C.B.) agree that an Anglo-Russian alliance could not have been arranged with better prospect of lasting endurance.

"If you scratch me, Charlie," says dainty Princess Pauline, shaking her finger, "you know you will find the Tartar."

"Scratching's *your* privilege," returns Cocky gravely, "and if you scratch me, do you know what will happen?"

"No!" exclaims the Princess, quite frightened.

"You'll break your pretty finger-nails!" cries Cocky, with one of his great guffaws, "I've got a skin like a rhinoceros."

Not great wit, but it makes us all laugh, and afterwards I remember it all the better, because when I am having a quiet pipe by myself—George has gone out to dine—and thinking that, though there has been plenty of foul weather and no

end of rain, there may be some sunshine after all, Anthony Fuller bursts in upon me with an evening paper, and points to a "Stop Press" telegram. It runs:—

"Prince Emilio Cassarabia, Vice-Chamberlain to the King of Italy, died suddenly this morning at the Palazzo Cassarabia, near Florence. He was married to Lady Beatrice Belleisle, the only daughter of the Duke of Middlesex."

I stare bewildered at the print.

"Tony," I exclaim after a pause, "ought I to cry or ought I to laugh?"

"Both," he says, "but both for happiness! Don't you remember that song 'Hope of the Past,' which Florian Pascal set so sweetly?" He sings in his rough but, to me, seraphic voice—

'I have waited for you, my darling,
By the ebb and the flow of the years,
You knew as I knew, my darling,
The bitterness born of Tears!
You have waited for me, my darling,
You have clung to the Hope of the Past,
And the joy of what must be, my sweetheart,
Has come in the glad "AT LAST."

THE END.

THE SONGS
"THE SCARLET CITY"
"THAT'S WHAT'S THE
MATTER WITH THE MAJOR"
"WHEN ALL THE WORLD
WAS YOUNG, LAD"
AND
"HOPE OF THE PAST"
ARE SET TO MUSIC

BY
J. B. WALDECK, EMLYN ST. MAUR
AND
FLORIAN PASCAL

AND ARE PUBLISHED BY
JOSEPH WILLIAMS
32 GREAT PORTLAND STREET, LONDON, W.

FICTION.

LOUP-GAROU.

By EDEN PHILLPOTTS. Price 6s.

THE PROCESSION OF LIFE.

By H. A. VACHELL. Price 6s.

THE SCARLET CITY.

By "POT" and "SWEARS." Price 6s.

BY THE GREY SEA.

By the author of "An Old Marquise." Price 6s.

NOOTKA. A Tale of Vancouver Island.

By LORD GRANVILLE GORDON. Illustrated by Louis Edwards.
Price 6s.

THE LOST EMERALDS OF ZARINTHIA.

By "POT." Price 3s. 6d.

THE LIBRETTO.

By RUDOLF DIRCKS. Price 3s. 6d.

A LUCKY DOG.

By W. SAPTE, Jun. Price 3s. 6d.

MEROVECH.

By CECIL HARTLEY. Price 3s. 6d.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BUSH.

By JOHN BELL. Price 3s. 6d.

TUEN, SLAVE AND EMPRESS.

By KATHLEEN GRAY NELSON. Price 2s. 6d.

SPORT.

Martin Cobbett.

BOTTLED HOLIDAYS FOR HOME CONSUMPTION.

By MARTIN COBBETT, author of "The Man on the March." Large crown 8vo. Price 6s. A limited edition, printed on hand-made paper and luxuriously bound. Price 10s. 6d. net.

THE MAN ON THE MARCH.

By MARTIN COBBETT, author of "Bottled Holidays." Large crown 8vo. Price 6s.

Sportsman.—"The reader will be hard indeed to please who cannot find something in it to interest and amuse him."

Daily Mail.—"The book is one which every lover of sport should possess."

Sporting Times.—"It is delightfully written, and is certain to become popular."

Talepitter and Swears.

A PINK 'UN AND A PELICAN:

Random Reminiscences.

By 'PITCHER and SWEARS (A. M. Binstead, author of "Gal's Jossip," and Ernest Wells, joint-author of "The Scarlet City"). Large crown 8vo. Price 6s.

A few copies of the Edition de Luxe, bound in vellum and art linen, are still left for sale. Price One Guinea net.

Daily Telegraph.—"This volume, the maddest, merriest book, full of irresponsible fun and reckless frivolity. . . . Wonderful collection of reminiscences of late nights, early mornings, and riotous days, in which racecourses, deep potations, prize fights, the Pelican Club, and all the easy frictions of Bohemia hold uproarious revel, without one touch of ill-temper or malice. . . . We take leave of the book with genuine regret. . . . But it is full of good spirits and facile *bonhomie*, spiced, too, with salt, which, if not precisely Attic flavour, is good, representative Bohemian."

Pall Mall Gazette.—"This is one of the raciest books you are likely to strike. . . . 'Pitcher' introduces us . . . to more sides of life than are dreamt of in the philosophy of Clapham, and uncommonly picturesque ones. There is the bygone racing press-room of the days of Joe Capp and of Reginald Shirley Brooks. . . . There is the dear departed Pelican. . . . There is the East End. . . . And there are stories innumerable and inimitable of the ways of men about town, racing sharps and hangers-on, and lively personages of all kinds."

Sportsman.—"The like, among books, of 'A Pink 'Un and a Pelican' we do not know. . . . The recommendation we can give is—Read it—there is no other way of getting all the juice out of it that it may be made to yield—and then it will not be a squeezed orange, for we can pick it up a year hence and again enjoy it."

Thomas Haydon.

SPORTING REMINISCENCES.

By THOMAS HAYDON. Dedicated, by permission, to the Earl of Hopetoun. Large crown 8vo, gilt top. Price 6s.

Star.—"Mr. Haydon's book is an interesting addition to reminiscent sporting literature."

Geo. A. Meagher.

FIGURE AND FANCY SKATING.

Dedicated to Lady Archibald Campbell, and with Preface by the Earl of Derby. By GEO. A. MEAGHER, Champion Figure Skater of the World. Profusely illustrated with diagrams. Crown 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.

RECENT FICTION.

Riccardo Stephens.

THE PRINCE AND THE UNDERTAKER

And what they undertook.

By RICCARDO STEPHENS. Large crown 8vo, cloth. Price 6s.

Aberdeen Free Press.—"Well told, show considerable imaginative power, and are most interesting reading."

Dundee Advertiser.—"The short stories are excellent."

Manchester Courier.—"The stories are in turn whimsical, droll, or weird; but in all there is a clever touch, and the interest is maintained right to the finish."

Glasgow Herald.—"Admirable series of short stories."

Guardian.—"Mr. Stephens has been fortunate in discovering a vein which has not been much worked, and he has used his find with real skill."

World.—"Altogether an admirable book, and one to commend itself to those who look at manner as well as matter."

MR. PETERS.

By RICCARDO STEPHENS. Large crown 8vo, cloth. Price 6s.

Pall Mall Gazette.—"A powerfully written and deeply interesting novel."

Glasgow Herald.—"The author not only possesses the faculty of narrative, but also distinct imaginative power."

Daily Telegraph.—"The novel is a strong one . . . excellently conceived."

Scotsman.—"It is well and intelligently written."

Dundee Advertiser.—"Mr. Peters' is an uncommonly good book. . . . With most writers one could afford to skip a page or two between; not so with 'Mr. Peters.'"

CONVERSATIONS WITH MRS. DE LA RUE SMYTHE.

By RICCARDO STEPHENS. Illustrated by W. G. Burn Murdoch.
Large crown 8vo, cloth. Price 6s.

Gabriel Setoun.

GEORGE MALCOLM.

By GABRIEL SETOUN. Large crown 8vo, gilt top. Price 6s.

Scotsman.—"Mr. Setoun's book is a success, shows a great advance, and should strengthen the author's hold on his public."

Literature.—"A book which is distinctly above the average."

ROBERT URQUHART.

By GABRIEL SETOUN. Large crown 8vo, gilt top. Price 6s.

Pall Mall Gazette.—"There is power and pathos in this charming Scots tale . . . a wholesome story . . . admirable work . . . vivid description . . . and it reflects the native wit and simple piety of the villagers with rare skill."

Dundee Advertiser.—"The book may be at once pronounced a great success."

Charles Edwardes.

SHADOWED BY THE GODS.

By CHARLES EDWARDS. Large crown 8vo, cloth. Price 6s.

